

A Year For France  
War Letters of  
Houston Woodward





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HOUSTON WOODWARD

# A Year for France

*War Letters of*  
Houston Woodward



The Yale Publishing Association, Inc.  
New Haven, Conn.  
1919

D570

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Gift-

Dr + Mrs. George Woodward

Dec. 20, 1924



## PREFACE

Henry Howard Houston Woodward was born at Chestnut Hill, Philadelphia, February 27th, 1896. Oldest son of Gertrude Houston and George Woodward.

Prepared for college at Chestnut Hill Academy and Taft School. Spent one year and a half at Yale, resigned after the mid-year examinations, February, 1917, entered the American Ambulance Field Service, sailed for France February 19th, 1917, and later became an aviator in the French army.

The only official report on Houston's disappearance was that of "missing in action," April 1, 1918, and the family have no further information.

The "Henry" or "Hennie" mentioned in these letters was Henry Howard Houston, II, both boys being named for their grandfather, Henry Howard Houston.

By a strange fatality all of Mr. Houston's descendants who were named for him died in Europe between 20 and 23 years of age. His son, Henry Howard Houston, Jr., died in Rome in 1879 just before his 21st birthday; Houston Woodward fell in action near Montdidier when 22 years of age, and Henry Howard Houston, II, the last of the name, was killed by a fragment of a shell near Fismes, August 18th, 1918, age 23 years.

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Since the above was in type a cable was received, February 22, 1919, from Mr. Edwards of the Y. M. C. A., that he had found Houston's grave near Montdidier.



## CONTENTS

LETTERS FROM FRIENDS OF HOUSTON . . .	I
SCHOOL AND COLLEGE LETTERS . . . . .	15
WAR LETTERS . . . . .	33
REPORT OF COMMANDANT OF SPAD 94 . . .	183



# LETTERS FROM FRIENDS OF HOUSTON

AMERICAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCES  
YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION

*Headquarters: 12 rue d'Aguesseau, Paris*

*June 5, 1918*

*Dr. George Woodward,*

*Krisheim,*

*Philadelphia, Pa., U. S. A.*

*My dear Dr. Woodward:—*

I have just had a long chat with a young man named Marinovitch, who was a member of the escadrille with Houston. It seems that the colonel in charge of the French Mission had written to the commander of the escadrille to send Houston's bag and other personal effects in to me, and Marinovitch brought in a suitcase in accordance with this instruction. He also told me that a trunk had been sent to me and would doubtless be received at the usual rate of delivery in France, which is not very speedy.

I send you herewith a list of the contents of the dress suitcase. I have this case now in my room at the Y. M. C. A. Secretaries' Club, and it is my idea to hold it here until we know definitely about

Houston's fate. If, however, you would prefer that I send the bag home at once, I will do so by one of our returning secretaries.

Marinovitch gave me a long and intimate account of Houston's life over here. He told me that he had met him first in December when Houston entered the escadrille; that he was a most daring aviator, thoroughly skillful in his mastery of the plane and absolutely courageous to the point almost of recklessness. For instance he said that Houston would frequently go out on solitary trips which of course means that he was without help in the event of attack. His desire to get some Boche planes was very great. It was generally felt in the escadrille that he had secured a plane sometime in February or March, but although obviously disabled, it came down within the enemies' lines and Houston did not get the proper credit for his skillful work.

Marinovitch also told me that last week Houston had been officially cited for his courage and had been awarded the Croix de Guerre. I have had this information confirmed from military authorities and I extend to you and Mrs. Woodward my sincerest congratulations. It does not often happen that a citation for courage is authorized after the disappearance of the man, and

I think that there are only two or three cases of the kind on record. I will procure for you an official copy of the citation and also the Croix de Guerre with the palm as I understand that in the event of the disappearance of the aviator the family are entitled to claim the same.

I have heard of a case recently in which an aviator was taken prisoner and no word reached our side of the line for three months. I have also heard of another case in which the word did reach our side within two weeks. Marinovitch tells me that recently a German aviator was taken prisoner and upon searching a list was discovered of allied aviators who had been killed by the Germans, and Houston's name did not appear on the list.

I send you the details of this evidence because I know that you will want to know everything that I do.

Marinovitch's mother is now living in Paris. She is a Russian. His father was a Servian prince. Although he is but nineteen years of age, I was very much pleased with his courage, and personality and general attitude toward life. I gave him fifty francs worth of cigarettes and chocolate to take back to the escadrille with the compliments of yourself and Mrs. Woodward, as

he told me they had received very few supplies since they were in the battle which has been pending for the last two months. I also took him to dinner with me at the Cercle Litteraire et Artistique, and I am glad to have had him for my guest.

With sincere regards,

*Yours faithfully,*

(Signed) FRANKLIN S. EDMONDS

*12 rue d'Aguesseau,*

*Paris, August 31st, 1918*

*Dr. George Woodward,*

*709 North American Building,*

*Philadelphia, Pa., U. S. A.*

*My dear Dr. Woodward:—*

Marinovitch has just been in to see me and I have delivered to him Houston's field glasses. I also gave him for himself and his mother one of the boxes of candy which I had collected from Morgan-Harjes Co. Marinovitch has now a record of having brought down sixteen German planes; he has received the Cross of the Legion of Honor; the French Medaille Militaire; the Croix de Guerre with nine palms for citations, and has just been given a month's leave of absence in



England. I told him to stop here on his return and I would give him a fifty franc package of cigarettes for members of Escadrille No. 94, and I will send the same by him each visit that he makes to Paris in your name. He tells me that the last cigarettes were much appreciated as they came to the corps when they had had practically nothing in the way of extra supplies for a long time.

Marinovitch tells me that in the recent allied victories they have covered all of the ground where the escadrille was encamped at the time of Houston's disappearance and that some of the members of the escadrille had found Houston's plane which is now within the allied lines, in a rusted and broken condition. They made vigilant inquiry for a grave or for some information concerning the aviator, but thus far this inquiry has not borne fruit. As soon as it is possible I will go up to this region and see if personal inquiry will bring any information. I am afraid, however, that the lapse of time indicates that little exact information will be obtained unless it should happen that Houston was wounded and is now in one of the German hospitals.

I will send you every scrap of news as I receive it. I have given Marinovitch a strong

invitation to visit me in Philadelphia and I feel sure you will want him to visit you too. He is an excellent young man. Just think that four years ago he was a school boy in England and that he has now made this record of service although he is as yet under twenty years of age.

With sincere regards to Mrs. Woodward and hearty good wishes, I am

*Faithfully yours,*

(Signed) FRANKLIN S. EDMONDS

*4, Rue Tronchet*

*August 30th, 1918*

*Dear Mrs. Woodward:—*

I've just been to see Mr. Edmonds and he gave me the glasses you so kindly offered me—I value them greatly as a “Souvenir of Houston.”

Ten days ago we had one of our escadrille pilots brought down in flames between Montdidier and Roye and while looking for his body came across a motor of a Spad that had been lying there for months. I was not in the bunch that found it, but they took the number and when we looked it up in the books we saw it was Houston's. I was going to go out next day and investigate and see if there was a grave or any-

thing there, but unfortunately we had to pack up that night and left at daybreak for another part of the front. The motor was near a little village southeast of Montdidier and I have asked the authorities to make investigation.

Thanking you for the glasses, and sorry not to be able to give you any more information,

*Yours sincerely,*

(Signed) *PIERRE MARINOVITCH,*

*Escadrille 94, S. P. 25.*

Baron Fersen, referred to several times in Houston's letters, came to this country as the head of a Russian Mission during the summer of 1918.

As Houston made Baron Fersen's apartments in Paris his headquarters while on leave, and as he and the Baron were thrown quite intimately together, we include the following letter:

*New York, Dec. 12th, 1918*

*Dear Dr. Woodward:—*

One of the reasons why I still believe that some day Houston will come back is that it seems to me impossible that such a fine character as his came into this world just to be wiped out without ever having had more opportunity to express itself in practical help to humanity's evolution.

I have known Houston more intimately than most people did. I was fortunate enough to penetrate into the sacred chamber of his soul, and the treasures I found there were such that I decided to ask him to collaborate with me after this war, in the various humanitarian reforms on which I expect to be able to work in Russia.

Houston was an exceptionally gifted man, but I believe only very few knew the depth and seriousness of his thought and aim in life. Most people only saw what he showed on the surface, but his real nature, so fine, so noble, so generous and so intelligent, was hidden, unknown except to few, and I am glad to pay in this letter tribute to a friend, of whom I am proud that he is my friend.

*Very sincerely yours,*

EUGENE FERSEN

ERNEST SARGENT CLARK,  
GIBBSTOWN, N. J.

*April 13th, 1918*

*Dr. George Woodward,*

*Krisheim,*

*Chestnut Hill*

*My dear Dr. Woodward:—*

In a recent paper I learned with much sorrow of the report "missing" concerning your son Houston. I write you a note telling you of my sorrow,

for I regarded Houston or "Woody" as we called him as a warm friend.

It was my privilege to meet him in France and to know him better as a member of the same ambulance section, old 13. While we were doing our heaviest work at Thuizy and LePlaine he was a mighty good worker and soon won his way into the good feelings of all the older men.

I enclose a photograph of the section taken at Champigneul where we were en repos. You can find him in the group.

Please pardon me if I am intruding by writing this note, but I do it in a spirit of sympathy. Look forward to the best—he may be a prisoner, but if not, he died doing a man's job.

I am glad to say I return soon.

*Yours most cordially,*

(Signed) ERNEST SARGENT CLARK

*January 21st, 1919*

*My dear Mrs. Woodward:—*

I am taking a belated opportunity to express to you the very great sorrow that Houston's death has caused me and to extend my sympathy to you and Dr. Woodward.

My fondness and admiration for Houston began at our acquaintanceship on the "Chicago"

and increased during our career together in the ambulance into a very firm friendship of which I shall always be proud.

Houston made friends quickly in Section 13 by his generous personality, but when the section ran into very hard work during the offensive at Mont Cornillet, his friendships were cemented by a very great admiration for his tremendous and untiring energy, which he devoted with all his soul to the performance of his duty as ambulance driver. His comrades and officers were all quick to appreciate such enthusiastic zeal which enabled him to accomplish so much more than the rest of us. He was always ready to forego his turn to rest if it were possible to carry one more load of *blessés*. His courage, which appeared at times to amount to rashness, was in reality prompted by his desire to throw everything he had into his work without thought or desire of reserving himself. It was this same quality that led him to join the flying corps. It was apparent to Houston, as to all his friends, that aviation was the service that he was exactly fitted for, and the only branch in which he could do his utmost share in the war, and although he was well aware of the danger connected with this service, he was always im-

patient of any suggestion that consideration of his own safety should enter into his decision to fly. He simply knew that he could accomplish more by joining the aviation service, so he joined. He would have been the last person to have considered himself heroic.

I understand that when last seen he was in combat with a German plane, and I am sure that such was the way he would have chosen to meet his death.

I am unable to express in words my fondness for Woodie, but I can say simply that he was my closest and truest friend while I was in France, and I feel that his friendship and the memories of him will never be forgotten as long as I live.

*Sincerely yours,*

JAMES A. DEVELIN, JR.

The following is an extract from a letter of Miss Elizabeth Frazer, a correspondent of the *Saturday Evening Post*, furnished through the courtesy of the editor, Mr. George Horace Lorimer:

*Paris, December 29, 1918.*

"I have just received your letter of December 6, and in the afternoon went out on the search of Mr. Houston Woodward. I put a tracer on at



the French Aviation Headquarters, the American Aviation H. Q., and the Red Cross. I think it extremely doubtful if we can get hold of the French Infantry records of the French army around Montdidier in April, which would be the only method of learning exactly what German troops were opposite them at that time. Those reports are extremely confidential, even now, depending on the reports of French spies, results of raids, etc., and it would take more influence than I possess to reach them. But as soon as I receive the present address of the commandant of the Spad 94 squadron, I'm going to write him about it.

"I should say that the Red Cross has already a correspondence and complete dossier on this case—a portfolio of several hundred sheets, and they seem to have gone into the matter very thoroughly. I read over that dossier yesterday, and it embodied reports from his commander, a sergeant, the British Red Cross, the Spanish Embassy, the Berne and Geneva prison authorities, and dozens of private confirmatory sources—and they all led to just nothing at all; the fact that he was lost in the mist and nobody could tell whether he was alive or dead. The Germans, apparently, according to the Spanish report, have no record of his being taken prisoner."



## SCHOOL AND COLLEGE LETTERS

*Houston was always a very good correspondent from his early days. Believing that an example of his earlier letters will be interesting to his friends, we have selected the three following.*



## SCHOOL AND COLLEGE LETTERS

FROM TAFT SCHOOL

*Sunday Eve.,*

*March 8, 1914*

*Dear Mother:—*

Well, here I am again writing my regular Sunday letter. It seems months since I last wrote you.

Only ten more days, and I will be home again, to stay for two weeks this time. This last term has gone the fastest of any since I have been in the school. I hope the next one goes as fast.

I received a privilege last week, so am allowed to study in my room any time at all. I do hope that I average 80 for the month, but I will have to work like everything this coming week to do it. Our exams are all this week, too.

In rummaging over some old papers this morning, I found a theme which I wrote last year, and which I got 100 on. I re-copied it, touching it up here and there, and am going to hand it into the *Oracle*. I want to make the board this month, and to do so, have to have six stories done by April first.

I am glad you people enjoyed Forbes-Robertson. Although you may not think so, I was really very anxious to see him, but did not want to see him twice.

I am surprised to find that I am interested in your birds. Having been home and seen the trap, and "bob-tail," and the cardinals, I was really quite interested in reading your letter about the new cardinal pair. The buncoes and sparrows don't appeal to me much, but I really am fond of those cardinals.

Maybe Mr. Taft doesn't think much of me now. Mr. Dallas was visiting me the other night, and he said that he inquired of Mr. Taft how many points to charge me for going home so long. Mr. Taft replied, "I don't want to charge him any, but I suppose I have to as a matter of form." Mr. Dallas then said that the "king" had remarked that I had taken a big improvement and was coming along much better than he had thought I was going to. Believe me, when the rex says that kind of a thing about a boy up here, there's something in it.

Bishop Lloyd came up here today for confirmation. There were only four to be confirmed. I did not get an opportunity to speak to him, although I wanted to. He preached two of the

very best sermons I have ever heard in all my life this morning and afternoon. I could listen to him easily for an hour every day in the week. I think he is the finest preacher I have ever heard.

As I told you when home, we are to have self-government next term. All the upper-middlers are to room on one corridor. This necessitated some doubling-up, so I am going to room with Frank G——, a very nice fellow from Fall River. I had preferred to room alone, for I think that it is more practical, but as it would cause complications I doubled up. I was really very lucky in getting G——, for he is the best fellow of those who are doubling.

Please let me know how you feel about my theatre-going this vacation. There are several boys who would like to come down to see me, but I don't think I shall ask them if you don't want me to go to the theatre much. I don't know how they feel about it, but I know I shouldn't want to visit out much if I couldn't enjoy the pleasure of seeing the theatre. I can't see much objection to seeing shows during vacation, even if it is Lent. You speak of depriving yourself during Lent, but by gee, I work self-sacrifice over-time up here at school. How would you like to be made to go to bed early every night, get up early in the morn-

ing, eat an ordinary breakfast, work your head off for five hours straight, eat a plain lunch, work another hour in detention, then work at exercises all the afternoon, study from 5:30 to 6:30, eat a coarse supper, and then work yourself dead from 7:15 to bed time, and then when you go home for a rest and a good time be forced to lead a quiet, hermetic, depriving, sacrificial life? I deprive myself of more pleasures in one day up here than you people do in a week. I don't get grape-fruit, cocoa, and chops for breakfast, I can't ride in an automobile any time I please, go wherever and whenever I want, have a lot of kids to amuse me, read for pleasure, eat good meals and hear music, play pool, sit by the fire, loaf, and be my own master. Of course, that's what I came to school for, but I don't think life from January 6th to June 22nd should all be a bed of thorns, and it seems to me that vacations ought to be just as happy as possible and as theatres are almost the brightest spots in vacations, why—but I'll let you dope the rest out.

I didn't mean to spend so much time arguing, but I wanted to have you see the matter the same way I did.

I haven't much time left, so I shall have to be brief.

There are several matters I wish you would have attended to for me. In the first place, please have a bottle of toothpowder, and my shaving set which I left in my bath room, sent up here immediately, for I need both badly.

Please have my mandolin brought in to Weyman's to be repaired. This is the most important of all.

Advise Stanley to look up all those records I sent him.

Enclosed are two bills which fall outside of my allowance.

Please ask father to send my March allowance. I am practically square with my bills, but have just bought a new suit for which I have to pay.

I hope you people are not still sore at me.

Well, it is almost time for bed, so I shall have to close.

*Au revoir* for ten long days.

*Very lovingly,*

HOUSTON

FROM YALE COLLEGE

*Wright Hall, Yale College,*

*October 25th, 1915*

*Dear Father:—*

There will probably be a lot of mistakes in this letter, as this is the first time I have used this typewriter. My roommate has rented it for this term.

I am sending a couple of clippings from the New Haven papers. They are quite typical, and occur with disgusting frequency. Can you blame the college for being sore at the papers here? The papers are all headlining the little rough-house we had the other night and even the New York papers are giving accounts of it. The trouble is that the mayor of the city was one of the people who got mobbed. He was handled pretty roughly, so was kind of sore about it. No one knew it was the mayor when they did it. I was right beside him at the time, because he had grabbed a student, and several of us were making him let go. A Junior grabbed him by the legs and threw him down. That was all there was to it. I thought of swiping his collar as a souvenir, but thought it would be a poor stunt if



the fellow didn't have much money. Now I wish I had since it was the mayor. The fellow who had him down sat on his chest and was tickling him. It was really awfully funny, and the poor mayor was so mad he couldn't talk smoothly at all. The account in the papers was perfectly absurd and disgusting. "Wild student outbreak"—"Whole police force needed to quell Yale outburst," and expressions like these were used by the papers. It wasn't a riot at all, just a good-natured rough-house.

It has grown quite cold suddenly. I have put on an undershirt. I only have two, so will have to go easy with them.

The first bunch of warnings has been issued, and it was a relief not to have my name on it. I find it awfully hard to work in the evening here. There always seem to be thousands of things to do.

Got your telegram. Don't lay any plans for my coming home Saturday night. I hate to take a cut for Sunday Chapel. Would rather save it till later. If my Stutz is there I might, and I may anyway, I don't know what I'm going to do, but you would better not count on my showing up home that night.

Everything is same as usual. Tonight I have

to go over and act as clerk for three hours at the gym, helping sign up fellows for the Yale Battery.

*Lovingly,*

HOUSTON

FROM THE YALE BATTERIES

*Tobyhanna, Pa.,*

*August 6th, 1916*

*Dear Mother:—*

I guess I have never let so long a time go by without writing, but it couldn't be helped. Soon after writing that last letter I received a big and unexpected promotion, which you apparently didn't understand according to your last letter.

It happened this way. I decided I was going to make the most of this opportunity this summer here in camp. Although I never thought we would go to the border, I felt sure the training would be intensive enough to be of real value in the army life later. Accordingly, I threw everything into it, and worked like the deuce every minute of the day. I was pretty soft at first due to previous loafing, and so was very tired for a few days, but soon got over that and hardened up like a bull dog. Between my hard work, and trying to cultivate a military carriage, I made such a good impression on my officers that when Colonel Danford instructed the captain of every battery to recommend a man for position of top

sergeant of Headquarters Company, and, ex-officio, drum major, Captain Moretti recommended me.

I was given the job, and I hate to think of what followed. I had been having an awfully good time as a member of the aristocratic privacy of Battery B. I had learned lots, and had a certain amount of time for recreation. The work had been very hard, but I like that, so it added to my enjoyment. As soon as I was made first sergeant, however, everything was changed. The man whom I replaced had been inefficient, and had left the papers in a terrible mess. Seventy-five per cent of the descriptive lists were missing, the morning reports were a terrible mess, there was no duty roster, and everything was a general hodge-podge. The company was made up mostly of wops and other foreigners who had been enlisted to bring up the strength enough to leave New Haven. These men were all under my direct supervision, and thrown in also was that awful band.

All in all, it was the most riotous, mutinous crowd of rowdies you have ever seen. It was an awful big undertaking for a person who had had no previous experience in handling men in the military life, but it was certainly a wonderful

training. I started right in to drive those men, and drive them I sure did. It was very interesting work. Some men you could ask politely once and they would do as they were told immediately, while others you would have to curse at like everything before they thought you meant what you said, and then it would be necessary to nearly threaten to lick them before they would do it. The man ahead of me had been rather lax, but believe me, I shot discipline into them.

The worst of it was that being top sergeant I had to be a model, and conform with every rule myself, which wasn't so pleasant. I was very tied down, and responsible for everything and everybody. I always liked to be irresponsible, it is so much more fun, but I couldn't be then. Anybody in the army will tell you that my job is the rottenest job in camp. It was especially so in Headquarters Company due to the captain we had. He is a noted —— Professor, but a rotten army officer. I don't believe he ever saw a uniform before he came here. Jack Hoyt, our lieutenant, had to resign because he couldn't get on with him, as did also several non-coms. I was thoroughly disgusted with the man before I had seen two days under him. He was like a child lost in the woods, absolutely lost when it came to

performing his duties, and was only getting in deeper. I was up till eleven or later every night, and rose before five every morning, trying to systematize things and straighten them out. Finally I just decided things couldn't go on the way they were, as nobody was learning a thing, and I made up my mind that things were going to be run in a military fashion, or I was going to get out. Everybody advised me to resign because I was doing first sergeant's work, the drum major's, and also the lieutenant's, as they hadn't yet appointed one. Anyone of these three is a job in itself, so you can see what I was up against.

Things at last came to a head, I had a scrap with the old man, and applied for a resignation. I got it, and so am now a corporal, and a much happier man, with time to myself, and time for drill and military instructions, which I never had as sergeant, and which I came here for. That is the story of my sergeancy. It was one big horrible nightmare.

Everything has been going beautifully ever since. When I got out everybody congratulated me, and only this morning Dick Richards, who succeeded me, said he would give me a lot to take the job back again. I wouldn't undertake it for \$500. It is a rotten cross between an office



#### THE VALE BATTERY COLORS AT TOBYHANNA

Houston is the middle figure holding the Yale flag. He had the honor of being selected to receive this flag when it was presented by President Hadley to the Yale Battery at Tobyhanna. He also carried this flag in the Yale Pageant in New Haven in October, 1916.





clerk and slave driver. I lost five pounds the two weeks I had it, and grew dark hollows under my eyes from lack of sleep. I had plenty of pep and drive left, but it was killing me. Since swinging the pick and shovel again and going through stiff calisthenics I have once more rounded into shape, and am thoroughly enjoying life.

Three Sundays ago I ran up from Philly in my Stutz with another fellow, went to Church with Uncle Sam and Charlotte at St. Martin's, and had dinner with Uncle But and Aunt Marion at Glen Summit. Two Sundays ago I took several fellows to the Summit for dinner, getting back just in time to lead the band at Guard Mount.

Yesterday several of us spent the day at Buck-hill Falls, having dinner at Mrs. Harris'. I never spent such a fine week-end. There were girls from Brooklyn, Philly, New York and Baltimore, and, believe me, they were there. We could hardly tear ourselves away and flew back, arriving just a second before taps sounded. I'm going there every chance I get after this. The Stutz makes my life *army de luxe*, and it certainly is a fine life. I had a wonderfully thrilling ride Saturday night. We went to Scranton for dinner, had a bully good evening, and left for camp

at 1:20 in the morning. Johnny Overton was the only one who started out with me, but we picked up three others there. Well, my brakes are worn through, the mountain roads around Scranton are awfully crooked, with very sharp corners, and a precipice continually on the off side. I was in a hurry and it was a very foggy night. I cut loose with the old Stutz, and although it was so awfully thick fog you actually couldn't see the road, I averaged about forty nearly all the way home. It was terribly fascinating. I had to sense where the road was, it was utterly invisible through the fog, and the only way I knew I was coming to a corner was when I saw we were about to go in a ditch, so I would throw the wheel over. The fellows were all praying, and were terrified. Finally they gave up, and just sat back with their eyes closed, not daring to look out. When we finally arrived in camp every one of the men shook my hand in turn, and said they had never seen anything like it before in their lives. I would rather get away with a feat like that than own a candy shop. It doesn't sound like much, but I'd like to see you drive a car forty an hour in a blind fog over an invisible road you aren't familiar with.

It is generally very hot here in the day time,

and very cold at night, sometimes getting down to just a trifle above freezing. I am thriving finely on this life, and take to it like a duck to water. It is pleasant anyway, but with my Stutz here and available two or three times a week, nothing more could be desired.

We shall probably be dismissed about the first of September. If so, will I have time to join you all for a couple of weeks in the West before you return home? I would like to visit you a while there.

I am in charge of quarters, and have spent nearly the entire day in writing letters, most of them to Buckhill. You can't imagine what a wonderful crowd there is there, and a uniform gets away with murder. We have had lots of fun parading the streets of New York, Philly, Scranton, etc., in our uniforms. Everyone steps out of the way for us, so we stand as tall as possible, throw out our chests, and walk as if we owned the whole blooming shebang.

Well, although I haven't written you for a long time, I have other letters to get off, and don't know when I shall get another chance. I am very contented with life here, and am having an excellent time. All the rummies have been transferred from our company, and a fine crowd

moved in, so life is exceedingly pleasant. I know you are having a wonderful time, and hope I can join you in September.

I saw in the paper that Stanley was one of the best shots at Plattsburg. That's fine, and he will use it to the utmost in claiming that he isn't a parlor snake. Well, I have been top sergeant in the most famous militia in the country, but I must confess I prefer being a private.

*With lots of love,*

HOUSTON

## WAR LETTERS



## HOUSTON'S WAR LETTERS

"S. S. Chicago,"

March 1st, 1917

*Dear Mother:—*

The submarine peril is naturally the uppermost in your mind, so I will begin with that. Well, to tell the truth, it really has been quite exciting these last few days. We have been running out from New York with every port hole on the ship boarded up at night, including both public rooms and cabins. The lights on the promenade deck were painted bluish-green and only half of them lit. A long canvas strip was spread the length of the deck, covering the rails, another similar strip running from rail to ceiling of the deck. In other words, the entire promenade deck was completely canvased in. These were the chief precautions till we reached the danger zone. No wireless messages have been allowed to be sent, as they would betray our presence. Our position each day was not disclosed in any way, but our mileage posted. The average run per diem was approximately three hundred miles, so you can see it is a very slow

boat, about fifteen knots under favorable conditions.

We entered the danger zone at seven yesterday morning. I was so thrilled that I got up early. It really was pretty interesting. Two men are stationed permanently in the crow's nest to watch for submarines. A lookout is placed in the extreme bow with a horn to give immediate notice of mines, and we ran slower all day. Five ships were sighted early in the morning, including the *Rochambeau* on her way back to New York. Signals were exchanged with the latter by means of wigwagging and telescopes. Nothing in particular happened all day. The French naval gunner we have on board stuck to his three-inch naval rifle all day, but didn't have occasion to use it, though he did train it several times on barrels which some people swore were mines, though I didn't think so at all. Immediately after nightfall the boat was stopped, and we lay to all night, merely going ahead fast enough to keep her pointed right. We made about thirty miles between sundown and sunrise; so you can see we weren't breaking any speed limits.

About twelve o'clock there was great excitement. I ran into several of the boat's officers and crew having an excited parley in the foyer,



and cursed myself out for not understanding French better. The purser said, "*Il ne parle pas français*" when one of the crew pointed at me. I had played bridge with the purser, so he knew my knowledge of his language. I wished they thought I didn't know English! Something was evidently up, for the men were very troubled and excited. A boy upstairs who knows French had been listening, and learned they had lost a key pertaining to some part of the wireless and another one which had something to do with opening the flood cocks. You cannot imagine the excitement and rumors which instantly stirred all the passengers. From somewhere everyone suddenly appeared on deck. The wireless sending-apparatus was disabled; we therefore couldn't summon help. German spies on board had somehow signalled the enemy's submarines, and had received a wireless that German cruisers had broken loose and were searching for us, and the boat couldn't be kept from falling into their hands because we couldn't open the cocks. Such and many others were the stories that flew all around, and even were believed by some people. Several had their life preservers on, and many spent the night on deck in steamer chairs with their life-belts close at hand. I was worried,

myself, about the wireless-disability story, and felt rather uneasy till about two o'clock when I went up into the bow and found that they had relit the mast-headlight, which hadn't been burning previously in the evening. Although the Captain had posted notices forbidding noises and lights of any kind outside, I figured that if we dared show our mast-headlight there couldn't be much danger from submarines. So I went below and enjoyed a good long sleep till luncheon today, getting awake in the morning long enough to eat a little breakfast.

That is about all there is to say about the submarine question. There is some danger, of course,—about one in fifteen, I have estimated. These estimates have been very amusing. When I said about a week ago that our chances were one in fifteen, a lot of people said it was only one in fifty or even one in a hundred. The last two days most of these people have changed to one in ten, some even to one in five. After these last two days, and particularly last night, I think it is not hard to pick out who will make the different degrees of ambulance drivers.

Our passage as a whole has been very comfortable and pleasant. The boat is absolutely all that could be desired, but it is so abominably

slow! Great heavens, sometimes you want to get out and row, it seems to be going so slowly! It is exceedingly sea-worthy, however. When we were about half-way across we ran into quite a storm. The wind registered eighty-two miles an hour, and the waves looked to be between twenty to twenty-five feet from trough to crest level. Standing on the boat deck, I took several pictures through a crack in the canvas of the boat with her nose completely under water, and with the spray and waves blowing so thick across her that you could not see anything of the lower part of the mast, or of the bow, the deck, nor anything ahead of you in fact. It was all just a mass of white spray and water. That storm proved quite thrilling. Part of the rail in the bow was washed off after being broken away by the water, and the wind was so high that the boat often stood stock still, and several times actually seemed to be going backwards. Once I honestly think it did go backwards a foot or two, judging from the foam on the water. The whole thing was quite a lot of fun, and very few people were seasick. I was wondering what our good old *Polly* would have done in the storm. Would she have turned a back flip, would she have let the waves roll over her and stagger

ahead, or would she have been battered and crushed to pieces, split apart under the terrific strain, and gone down? I also wondered how a destroyer would have behaved. I have something to say to you a little later about destroyers, —I won't worry you unnecessarily now.

As to the crowd on board, the least said the better. If we had another week to put in I think riot would run riot towards the end. I am rooming with one of the nicest fellows on board, a Harvard ex-sophomore, from Chicago, Garret Foley. I like him immensely, but I am afraid he is a little over-aristocratic. We arranged to room together almost before the ship left the dock. Some of the other fellows are mighty nice chaps, there are a few first classers like Jimmy Develin, but the rest are absolutely impossible. A few are downright muckers, and how they ever got into the ambulance I don't know. They'll disgrace America, disgrace the ambulance, and least of all, disgrace themselves. I hope they get fired the first week before they have a chance to disgrace their country. We have been on the boat so long now, and have had such little exercise that everyone is beginning to get a bit pettish and touchy. This anxiety sets everyone's nerves on edge, anyway, and on all sides little signs of fric-

tion are beginning to appear. I have enjoyed the trip tremendously, myself. To sleep all day till four or five, read, play cards, or talk in the evening is the usual program. I have become fairly proficient at bridge and chess for lack of anything better to do, but am glad we have only a day or two more.

(LATER)

The Captain must have become a little bolder tonight, for we are running full speed. The canvas screens are down, however, and the lifeboats half lowered, almost ready for the passengers to climb in from the promenade deck. They have been this way for two days now. They now say we won't get in till Saturday afternoon about three. That will make nearly two weeks aboard the boat. No wonder everyone is stale. I suppose it will take all day Sunday to run up from Bordeaux to Paris. They say the trains are very irregular now, and the ride sometimes takes as much as twenty hours. There are several Fords on board consigned to the ambulance, and I would like like everything to drive one of them back to Paris, but I imagine they will send men down from there to run them back. The roads are said to be fine, running through Tours and Orleans.

You know I almost forgot that I was a man. I didn't realize until late in the afternoon of the 27th that it was my birthday. The first thing I did was to buy a box of cigarettes and a bottle of Pol Roger, 1906. That was all the celebrating I did outside of a few chess games. Jimmy Develin and I both had our birthdays on board and are going to hold a little coming-out or coming-in party in Paris. Jimmy is an awfully nice fellow, I wish that all the Harvards were as good. Speaking of that, when it comes to Harvard and Yale, give me Yale. Believe me, I don't know whether all these fellows are typical or not, but they certainly wouldn't get away with a thing at Yale, and they aren't any too harmonious among themselves.

Well, I hear cards calling me. I mail this tonight. If we get sunk you never will get it, but if we do go down, blame Wilson if he doesn't declare war. Personally, I don't think there's a submarine within miles, and am going to bed without worrying. If people would only realize the futility of worrying! If we get sunk, we get sunk, and if we don't, we don't, and no amount of worrying in all the world will alter the situation in the least, and I can't see why people make themselves uncomfortable about events beyond



their control. The Captain is the only man on the boat who has any excuse for worrying, and he, poor soul, probably does a lot more than his share.

Half-a-dozen of the ship's crew have been on boats before which have been sunk. Our cabin steward was made a German prisoner, and released upon giving his oath not to take up arms against Germany. The gunners are praying that we see a submarine, as they get a tremendous bonus if they keep one off or else sink it.

I have become firmly convinced that I was dead right in leaving college to come to France, and please don't think you made a mistake in letting me, for—well, you would always have regretted it if you hadn't!

I expect to cable you care of Bonnell from Bordeaux, but Heaven only knows how often you will hear from me after that, as I am such an abominable writer. I did have a code arranged by which I could let you know various things while at the front, but decided it was hardly worth while. There is one thing I will do, however. We aren't allowed to say at what towns we are, so I will let you know in this way. Whenever I begin a paragraph with a  $\wedge$  without putting any letter above, the first letter of every word

that follows will spell the name of the town or district where I am stationed; thus,  $\Delta$  come home and maybe Paul and George not expecting any visits, etc. This sentence clearly spells "Champagne." I will put the date thus if I use the trick, and will put the sentence in the first 3 paragraphs—5/7/17. Look for the date. In your first letter say "Your car was sold today" if you understand.

Am stopping now. You know where to write.

*Very lovingly,*

HOUSTON







HOUSTON IN HIS AMBULANCE-DRIVER'S UNIFORM

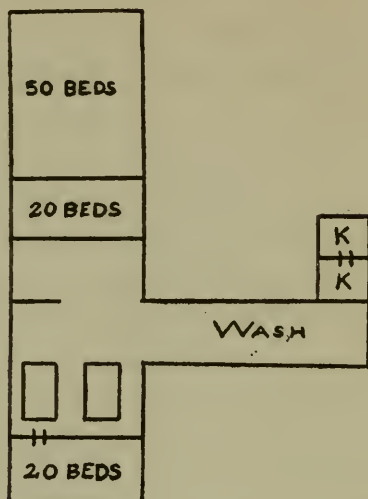
*Palm Sunday, April 2nd, 1917*

I am sorry that this is the first letter I have written you since coming to France, but, strange as it may sound, it is my first opportunity. I was busy absolutely every minute from the day I stepped foot in Bordeaux to yesterday, the 31st of March, when I left Paris for the front, exactly four weeks after landing. I can't begin to tell you of all I did during the month, but will try to tell of the chief things.

You already have my letter describing the journey across. The ride up the river to Bordeaux was perfectly beautiful. Nothing like it in the United States. Everything so neat and nice, with here and there quite a large and very well-kept estate. Had dinner at the Café de Bordeaux, and rode in a first-class compartment with Jim Develin all night up to Paris. We were the only ones at first, but at Poitiers many others climbed in, so we had to sit up all night. It was a very interesting crowd, mostly soldiers, of course, and we had a very pleasant trip. It's surprising how well one can talk French if one has to.

We had breakfast Sunday morning at 21 rue

Raynouard. It's a very large house. The ground floor is planned like this:—



There are old gardens, enormous lawns and paths. I never saw such an enormous place in the middle of a city before, except the girl's place in Baltimore. But it was altogether too damp and uncomfortable there—beds too short and hard, and all that sort of thing—so I spent only five nights there during my month's stay. The Hotel Continental was my headquarters in Paris, it was so much more pleasant. I slept there, and ate at the various cafés. I only had half-a-dozen meals at rue Raynouard—whenever I went broke

—but they weren't bad. My Paris life I'll just speak of lightly. As for working so hard in a machine shop, as I expected, the only times I ever saw a Ford were when I took the A. A. test and then the official test for the license.

The most interesting thing we did was to go to Bordeaux and run fifteen chassis up to Paris. The first day out we went through a beautiful country, but the Fords, being brand new, weren't in a very good mood for enjoying scenery, and the dust made a very effectual screen in case any spies wanted to know how many cars were in the convoy train. We couldn't make Poitiers the first night, and didn't care to stop at Angouleme, so compromised and put up at, or rather put up with, — for the night. We were to rise at six in the morning, but of course the Government had to select that morning as the one on which to move the time ahead an hour, so we rose at five and started at eight. Lunched at Poitiers, and spent night at Tours. Visited the Cathedral, cinema, and other places of interest, and slept in a bed which must have been a hundred years old, but its age was beginning to tell on it, and I was afraid it would collapse at any minute. Lunch next day was at Chartres. Beautiful Cathedral and good café, but didn't like it much otherwise.

In the afternoon on the run to Paris we had snow, hail, rain, and everything else imaginable. Sitting on soap boxes as we were, the protection from the elements wasn't the best, but, as usual, when anything isn't as it might be here, *c'est la guerre*. How good the Café de Paris seemed that evening for dinner!

There's no use describing anything else. I'm at the front now. Sorry I can't tell where. Just arrived this morning after spending the night in a town ten miles behind the lines. I had heard about the rotten food one gets here. For lunch we had *hors d'œuvre*, tripe and kidney, fresh bread and butter, lamb, potatoes, beans, several kinds of wines. Not so bad. I brought along a little gasoline (essence here) stove, so will have hot chocolate every afternoon with toast and butter. After lunch a fellow received a call to go up for some *blessés*. Went with him, and saw first glimpse of real war. It wasn't any different from what might be imagined. Dead horses in the ditches, screens along the road where we were in sight of the Boches' trenches, shell-craters in the fields and filled ones in the road. The French 75s were opening an attack over the crest of a hill on some Boche battery which was trying to blow them up. Off to the

left were clouds of white smoke—stuff which proved to be a gas attack. We got our gas masks out, but didn't need them, as the wind wasn't blowing in our direction enough. The whole thing was novel to me, but it looked as if war ought to be pretty good sport. No shells fell very close, only close enough to be heard faintly, so I can't say I have received my baptism of fire yet. It rather makes you want to be out there on the line with the boys instead of merely running an automobile around back out of danger. The men in the trenches were all covered with mud, and looked pretty wet and cold. Poor beggars, life is pretty wretched for them. Their dugouts are very comfortable, though; warm, dry and quite pleasant altogether. I couldn't look around much, as the blessés had to be hurried back. One trench was about seven feet deep, with wicker-like sides and board floor, a very thorough structure.

Mail's going soon. Can write frequently now, and will,

*Much love,*

HOUSTON

*P. S.:* The money I cabled for is for a new company run by excellent men and will be tremendously successful. It is to treat peat in a

certain way which will make it an excellent substitute for coal—a priceless and unpurchasable article now. The French government is helping, the inventors have been excused from the Army to work on it and the government laboratories have given an excellent report on it. If successful I will make a great deal of money, if unsuccessful the loss will not be a lot.

I have met the most interesting people: inventors, scientists, officers, government officials. The most interesting was Baron Fersen. His family were intimate friends of the Czar's, and have many presents from him. His apartments were different from anything I have ever before seen, as were the reindeer-skin clothes he wore when at home. The foremost portrait painter of Russia was visiting him, and using one of his rooms as a little studio. When I go in the Foreign Legion I think I will have her paint my portrait in my aviation uniform. She is a princess of a house somehow opposed to the late Czar. Paris is without question right now the most interesting, cosmopolitan, and also pleasure-seeking city in the world. I moved in awfully high-brow circles. Never spent such an interesting, valuable, and instructive month in my life. Can't begin to tell all my experiences



there. One day for tea at the Ritz I was in a party in one corner of the room comprising English, French, Serbians, one Italian, Russian, and another American. Every type in the world but the Central ones is represented generously in Paris. It is a wonderful show to sit outside the Café de la Paix and see all the officers and soldiers of all the warring nations walk by. It was a lot of fun swanking around the boulevards with riding boots, kid-leather coat, malacca and ivory cane and other accessories. Our uniforms are very good looking when made by a good tailor. This P. S. is almost as long as the letter.

*Easter Sunday, 1917*

*Dear Mother:—*

I have just got your two letters of March 18th, 22nd and 23rd this afternoon. I am very much ashamed of myself for having written so little, but I do seem to have been terribly busy.

It is just a week ago today that I arrived at the front, but last Sunday was the only day of service to the trenches I have seen as we have been on the march with our division ever since. I say "on the march," but actually we have travelled only three days and "rested" six, which makes more than a week, but the travelling was done between five and nine in the morning, so can hardly count.

I suppose the chronological order is the best way to write this letter, so here goes, always remembering I can't mention names to please the censor.

Last Sunday I have already written about. Monday morning we spent mostly in packing, which took a longer time than usual because the section had been settled for about a month. The cause for our moving was that the division to which we are attached is being removed from a

comparatively quiet front, where they have been for some time, to a very active front, which will mean heavy work and little sleep for us. We moved only about nine miles, arriving in the afternoon at a quiet little village about five miles back of the lines. The rest of the afternoon I very foolishly spent in eating *petits gateaux*, or little pastries, and drinking chocolate and wine, but learned a very good lesson about stuffing, since it used up all my vitality digesting the mass, and left me with a great and glorious cold, from which I am now completely recovered, however. I am very careful about my diet now, though, you may be sure. That night I slept with all my clothes on, including wet boots, inside an ambulance with only two blankets over me, so was very cold by morning, which also aided in my catching cold. Lesson No. 2. Since then I have slept very comfortably in my sleeping bag with coat and boots off.

Now that this finishes Monday, let me digress a little to speak of the sleeping bag. It is almost without question the most valuable thing I possess here. Inside its warm and waterproof covering I sleep between a quilt and four blankets, and am as comfortable as in my luxurious bed at home. It is really a wonderful bag, and never

again shall I be without one if I can help it, while roughing it in the open. It is really wonderful what a difference it makes, and I can't speak highly enough of it.

Tuesday the third we spent in knocking around the village. It rained very hard in the morning, but I kept perfectly dry in the excellent raincoat I bought at Rue Raynouard, a sort of petticoat raincoat without pockets or openings of any kind except for the head. The village was full of Moroccan cavalry, splendid looking fellows, commanded by the French living in Morocco and Algeria. They are going to play a large part soon, and are easily the finest troops I have seen in France yet, considered as a body, that is. They sensibly wear the khaki instead of the light blue, and cut a fine figure on their Arabian ponies, with peculiar high cantels on the saddles. I want to procure one of their khaki steel helmets to wear instead of the French blue one, but I hope it won't be from a corpse that I have to get it.

In the morning also I found a regimental boot-maker and had knobs put on the pair of rubber boots I bought in Paris. They are excellent ones, reaching all the way to the thigh, and have heavy leather soles.

It cleared off after lunch, so took a short hike

through the beautiful countryside, lying down to sleep between the rails of the very narrow guage railroad which feeds supplies and ammunition from the bases to the trenches. We returned in time for our five o'clock chocolate, and at dinner learned that we would have to rise at three in the morning in order to start at five to go only some twenty miles or less. The regiment starts at seven when it moves, and we have to be well on ahead, hence the early rising.

*(Some days later) Friday, the 13th, Sec. 13*

It seems I never can finish a letter. I had better just try to write short ones and get them off instead of long ones.

We have been en repos for a week now. This morning we were ordered to move at eleven, then at three, then told we would not move at all. That is typical of the French Army. "Never obey an order, but wait for a counter order," is a common saying here.

I find sleeping in a barn is one of the most comfortable beds one can have. Every few days you have to loosen the straw, as it gets packed pretty hard, and also pile more straw or hay under the head and shoulders, but outside of that the bed needs very little attention. Where we were be-

fore was not quite so comfortable in the hay on account of the rats. Great big devils, not in the least afraid of you; in fact I guess *we* have the fear. I decided they wouldn't hurt me if I left them alone, but the rotters chewed up the chocolate I had in the pocket of my sheepskin coat at my head. The noise the chickens and ducks make at three isn't hard to get used to, but I do hate that squeaking cry of a big rat about three feet from your head.

At last I have hit upon the right combination in dress, and will always know exactly what is needed after this when roughing it anywhere. The first principal is to keep warm above all else. The second is to keep dry, and the third is to keep feet as dry and warm as possible. I suppose of course you know this, but I never realized its importance before.

America's entry into the war doesn't seem to affect anybody very much. I'm very glad Mr. Wilson finally came in, even if only for the killing, because now we can have an army and navy in the United States, although they won't help out any in this war, excepting perhaps naval patrol work.

The weather is fine today, strange to say. It rains five days of the week here and snows the

other two; that is the recent record, at any rate. It was snow alone which held up the remarkable British advance in the Somme. Everywhere one hears great praise for the British now. They are fighting like a bunch of wild-cats. The Boches are giving themselves up like the cattle they are. Within a few days in the Somme battle recently the British took 11,000 prisoners, and that doesn't count the Boches they drove back into the trenches, not wanting to bother feeding them.

Hennie is doing finely. I hear from him now and then. The rear of his car has been peppered, and one man in his section had a three by nine piece of shell knock out the window-frame of his ambulance. It must have missed his head by less than four inches.

The Boches are firing on our ambulances now that the United States is in the game, so things are livening up. Piatt Andrew asked the chief of the automobile division to give the A. A. the most dangerous posts now. Two sections were immediately ordered to go soon to these same dangerous posts, and thank God good old Sec. 13 is lucky enough to be one of these two select, so *voilà*. I wouldn't be surprised to see some of the boys in the A. A. killed every once in a while from



now on, but I don't want to be one of the unlucky ones.

Talk about hard life, self-sacrifices, tedious labor, etc., if this is it, give me those things the rest of my life. On my word, I have never enjoyed six weeks more than these last six in all my life. Paris is Heaven in my estimation. The front is corking good fun. It's a man's life, all right, but a jolly good one. I haven't experienced a bored or dull moment for six weeks and we've been en repos for nearly two weeks at that. I've been to ——, a pretty big town not far from the front practically every day lately, and enjoyed myself immensely.

If anybody says you don't need to spend money, just tell him he has his dope all wrong. I spend almost as much money here as I do home. That's an exaggeration, and I don't want to give the wrong idea, but you do drop a lot of coin here.

The villages and farms all show evidences of the Boche advance in 1914 around here. The farmyard where we are now had one whole side of the quadrangle burned to the ground, and when these good farmers returned after the Boche retreat, they found every bit of live stock and supplies swept from the place.

I love these French people. It's wonderful



how kind, patient, generous and good-hearted they are. Believe me, Americans can learn a very, very great deal from the French peasants, farmers, and urbanites in the way of manners. They are the most obliging, hospitable and kind-hearted people that can possibly be imagined. No wonder the people who live a while in France love the country so. I have been here a very short time, but have caught the spirit heartily myself. "Gentile" describes perfectly France, the French and *tout français*. I shall hate like everything to leave this beautiful and wonderful nation behind me. The only way I don't want to leave it is with a little sign over me "*mort pour la France*." The country is littered everywhere with ghastly numbers of crosses marked "*mort pour la patrie*," or not marked at all. Often the name of the corpse is unknown and a naked cross merely shows where a French soldier lies. These cross forests are the one thing here which have given me feelings of momentary sadness. I don't mind the agonized shrieks of the blessés, or their pleadings to die, or their groans of "*misère, misère*," but when you see a cross and think that there lies someone who was enjoying a beautiful life, and was probably torn away from a wife and several children to undertake a rotten, nasty,

messy business which no one wanted, it does hit you pretty hard. And then to see those fine chaps in the towns resting, laughing, and enjoying life to the fullest, and a few days later hear they had been killed at the front, it certainly does seem terrible. *Eh, bien!* some of us are still alive, and enjoying life, which has suddenly seemed much more sweet and precious than it used to.

Here comes another interruption. I'm going to stop here and send the letter now, for I don't know when I can write again.

If you get this before McFadden sails, please give him those United States Army shoes I ordered from A. and F. in New York. I would like awfully to have them, if you can get hold of them. Will try to write soon.

*Very lovingly,*

HOUSTON

P. S.: Kindly save these letters. I want them as souvenirs later.

## CORRESPONDANCE MILITAIRE (POSTAL)

*April 19th, 1917*

*Dear Father:—*

Things have been going awfully lively the last three days. Was up two nights without getting any sleep, but got a couple of naps in the day time. Our present cantonment, or station, is within plain view of the Boches, and from the barn where we sleep it is very easy to see the shells bursting around the trenches.

The French have just finished a tremendous attack. The number of blessés was overwhelming. It's a terrible sight to see these men all cut to pieces. They are the most enduring crowd I have ever seen. Poor beggars, you certainly have to feel sorry for them.

Saw a lot of Boche prisoners. They weren't a very imposing looking crowd, and did not at all seem to mind being prisoners. The poor devils all seem to be pretty thoroughly sick of the war.

The poilus seem to think the Boches are all in, and will quit soon. Everyone is waiting for the end with great longing.

If the United States send troops over here, I hope they will be the scum and not the finest, for

they'll all be killed or maimed for life. I'll never forget the results of this last attack. Am going to bed now to get a much-needed sleep. Have lost track of time, but I think this is April 19th.

*Love,*

HOUSTON

*Ambulancier Americain, S. S. U. 13, Par B. C. M.,  
Paris*

*Saturday, April 21st, 1917*

*Dear Mother:—*

At last I have a breathing spell to spend time for myself, although I may be called out any minute. I am spending these few spare minutes writing to you in a peasant's house with some delicious fresh bread, cheese, jam, and milk before me, so you can see we aren't starving, at any rate.

Never in my life have I seen such work as this week. The attack started about midnight Monday, and things didn't slacken up very much till yesterday morning. I was up from ten o'clock Tuesday morning till nine o'clock Thursday night, getting only a few naps now and then in the daytime. I only slept from eleven to one Monday night, so was practically up from Monday morning till Thursday night.

I want to say right off I've changed my views about war. Sherman said it was hell, but it's a sight worse than hell. I hope that I never again will see the sights I've seen these last few days. The French attack along the whole front is supposed to be the biggest push yet; the German papers have called it the greatest battle

of the world; it must have been one of the bloodiest. Our section was right in the midst of the thickest part, and the fellows certainly did wonders. Some of the boys got only four hours sleep out of sixty. The other fifty-six took in running in pitch darkness or the rain, and even snow at one time, tearing back and forth with blessés, and the way they stood the strain was marvelous.

Night before last I had a mighty narrow escape. I was about one and one-half miles back of the front trenches, passing in front of a battery of 75s, when a shell whistled just in front of me, and exploded in the ditch, spattering mud on me. It was such a tough night that two fellows were on each car, and the one with me swore he could have touched the shell with his hand. I think that was an exaggeration but the obus certainly wasn't any ahead of my radiator. Close enough anyhow, too close for comfort. The safest spot near the trenches seems to be a sort of no-man's land between the rear trenches and the batteries. It's a rather broad strip, with almost nothing there, and few shells seem to drop. Not so nearer the trenches or back to the batteries; that's a different story.

You know it's remarkable what good luck the

American ambulanciers have. The English ambulanciers have been hit, so have the French, but somehow the Americans have pulled through with but three killed and only a few hit. Several in this section have been spattered with mud from bursting shells, but that's all. I certainly hope this record keeps up, for it does seem remarkable.

The sound in the world which displeases me the most is the whistle of an arriving shell. Believe me, I'm not ashamed to admit that when I hear one of those blooming Boche obus whistling for me, I want to turn and run just as hard as I can tear. You can always hear them and tell pretty nearly where they are going to land, and when you hear one of those babies getting closer and closer, then see it land with a flame and a bang, and send mud flying in all directions, believe me, you're mighty glad it missed you by that much. The road we drove over the night before last was strewn on both sides with dead horses and smashed camions and wagons. The Boches were shelling it that night and although most of the shell holes had been filled during the day before, I went into several fresh small ones. They seem to have the range of the road pretty well, but luckily most of the shells fall in one ditch or the other or to the side.



About the attack itself, all that I can say is that there hadn't been nearly enough preparation made before they sent those poor devils of poilus into that sea of mud to be mowed down by the Boche mitrailleuse and shrapnel. The Boche artillery hadn't been driven from these positions, nor had their mitrailleuse been driven from these trenches, hence when our men started across the mud lake in the rottenest rainy weather imaginable, well, our work tells the rest of the story, as do overflowed hospitals, the new graveyards, and the number of poor, shot, smashed-to-pieces men.

I'll say right now, I'm not sorry Wilson hasn't sent an army to Europe during the last two and one-half years. I never imagined war was quarter of what it really is. It's true that our section has seen one of the biggest battles of the war—all the papers call it that. I have seen enough to make me wish strongly that the war will be over soon, that there will never be another, and that I can have the pleasure of seeing the Kaiser suspended somewhere with a rope around his neck.

The leader of our section, who has been in the American Ambulance for a long time, says that no section of the A. A. ever did work like ours before, that the work done at Verdun last summer (he was there himself) did not compare with



what we had done this week. Believe me, I'm darned proud to be a member of Section 13, American Ambulance. Our reputation around here has spread, and yesterday afternoon when I drove a load of four blessés into —— I found a lot of people gazing at my car with interest, and a couple told me they had heard of the work we had done, and fairly beamed their delight on the good old little Ford.

People can say what they like about the way I used to drive my automobile, but I'll bet I'm the best-trained driver for this work in the whole section, almost. I find my Stutz training indescribably valuable now. It helps in sensing the road in pitch blackness, in spinning through the tightest holes, in missing camions and horses by inches, and in many other ways. It gives me a confidence in driving I could not possibly otherwise have, and helps out in every way imaginable.

This war seems terribly hopeless to me. I don't see how it ever can be settled in a military way. I hope there will be a revolution in Germany before long. It's the only way I see out. The Allies can push the Boches back a little at a time, but it costs terrifically in lives and munitions, and I can't see that the gain begins to compensate

for the loss, not the gain and loss I have seen anyway. The first night of the attack was different from anything I've ever seen. The firing of the French batteries made an incessant unbroken roar from twelve midnight to six in the morning. We rolled through the lines of guns that night, and no lights were needed. It was bright as mid-day, the sky all red and gold, with many star shells and signal rockets adding their brilliant glare with the cannon's flashes. Jets of flame leaped from invisible guns on all sides, shells were landing more intermittently with their brilliant flashes and geysers of mud. Now and then we would come upon a wounded horse, shrieking and dying in agony. Shell-destroyed supply camions lay in the ditches, reserve troops were marching silently, grimly forward, groups of groaning, stooping blessés were struggling gamely backward. It was hell let loose, and seemed like a dream, a delirium. I could hardly believe it was I who was passing through this. One could not think but had to act without thinking, on instinct, and the memory of the whole bloody, foolish business is burned on my mind in such a way that I can never forget it.

It's time for dinner. I may be needed right afterwards, so must stop now. I do hope none

of us get killed, but we're running risks. I haven't heard from you for a long time, but mails are very irregular. I hope everything is all right with you.

My three most valuable things are my sleeping bag, my heavy rubber shoes, with thick woolen inners, and my muffler which keeps my chest warm while rolling.

*Much love,*

HOUSTON

## POST CARD

*Dear Father:—*

Sherman's remark about war was only half right. I wish I would never hear another shell. People used to come into this war for adventure. This war isn't adventure, it's a dirty, stinking, rotten, nasty hell. There isn't a man living that likes it who has seen it close. Lots of things we read in the American papers are screamingly funny, but pitiable in their ignorance of what war really is. Even the Parisians don't know what it's like, and America can't possibly begin to imagine the terrible realities. The Consul General was here the other day, and said he would feel safer in the trenches than crossing the Champs Elysees. Poor fool! That's the most asinine remark I've ever heard. He was itching to see the trenches. You couldn't pay me, the other ambulanciers, or the French soldiers to go near them if it wasn't our duty. I like the ambulance tremendously, and would like to reënlist, but feel it my duty to fight. Believe me, I don't want to fight, and if I get killed I hope I kill at least fifty of those cochons first. It's terrible, the things they do. I'll believe any story I hear

of them now. Is America making much heavy artillery? That's what's winning this war, for the British. They can't possibly make enough.

*Lovingly,*

HOUSTON

Sunday, May 12th, 1917

Dear Mother:—

I just finished reading your letter of April 24th this minute, and am answering immediately. Have been too busy rolling and sleeping lately to find time to write anyone, and even now am stationed at a poste de secours, and expect a call any moment. The French expect to attack again tonight, which will mean hard work for another two days. So this may be my only opportunity for some time.

To save time, I'm going to just jot things down as they come into my head, which will probably result in incoherent reading, but as usual, "*c'est la guerre.*"

You spoke in your letter about sending Abercrombie shoes. Thank heaven, they have come at last. I was about to borrow money and cable for them special. But *please* send that other pair. I will need both pairs greatly—if they fit.

My ideas have been completely revolutionized about many things since seeing this war close. In the first place, I admire Woodrow Wilson greatly now, strongly endorse his policy, and think him a mighty clever man who has handled

the situation excellently. I'm darn glad he kept the United States out of the war as long as he did, but now that we are involved, I think we shall be the ones who win the bloody game. France has shot her bolt. Her fighters now all lie under the sod. Her army comprises old men for the most part, and they are dreadfully tired. Tired in body and tired in soul. Her one strength now is the Foreign Legion and the Moroccans—but how those devils do fight! They are used only for attack, are never kept in the trenches for defense, gain ground nearly every time they do attack, and are the terror of the Boche army. The Boches are scared to death of them, and I don't blame them. I, too, would hate to see those swarthy khaki devils coming at me with their flashing black eyes craving blood, knife in mouth, bayonet set, intent on killing. They don't take many prisoners. Kill! Kill! Kill! are the words they use in describing their onslaughts, and it's their tradition that they are never taken prisoners themselves. I admire those Algerians. They're fierce fiends, but they're the most magnificent fighters imaginable. All last night and today they've been marching to the lines, hence we expect an attack very soon. We were ordered to have every car in perfect readiness to roll at



six this evening, but I hope it won't be another sixty-hour session without sleep. I was up all night before last, and slept only seven hours last night, so am pretty tired to start this attack. I would like to describe the military situation here, but *c'est defendu*, as it would indicate our position. It's a tremendously interesting sector and we see every phase of warfare, from hauling supplies to artillery barrages and air duels—excepting, of course, the attacks over No-man's Land.

I am crazy to enter aviation. If that fails, I think I can study the artillery game till Uncle Sam sends his new young blood to drive these swine out of France. Fresh blood, that's what's needed. No amount of drugging the poilus and getting them drunk is worth a young devil of nineteen to twenty-six when it comes to a charge.

And artillery is what I hope to see. Cannon, cannon, more cannon, still more cannon. That's the reason of the extraordinary British successes. They knock the very hell out of the Boche trenches, hurl a flood of steel on the roads in back, which prevents the bringing up of reserves, and when the Tommies, with their wonderful bravery, charge over No-man's Land, they find nothing but wreckage, with the Boches holding up



their hands, begging food. Prisoners? The British don't take prisoners during an attack. For instance—they come upon a dugout. "*Wie viele Männer*," they have been taught to yell down. "*Sieben*," answer the Boches, expecting to come out and be taken. But not a bit of it. Into that dugout the British hurl seven hand-grenades, and hurry on, leaving behind a mess of brains, blood, and shreds of clothing. That's the way to fight this war. The enormous numbers of Boche prisoners taken is due to their being surrounded in big groups during a good advance. The English have paid pretty dearly, however. Mitrailleuses spit death at them from every hummock, burrow and shell hole. They say the number of Boche mitrailleuses encountered is terrific. But the Huns never live to tell the tale afterwards. They're losing awfully heavily, the Germans, but thousands upon thousands more will have to be killed or taken prisoners before they will give in. I hate it intensely, this wholesale slaughtering. Kill, maim, destroy is the spirit everywhere. Americans so far away from it can't begin to imagine the horror and awfulness of it all. It's true that our section is in the midst of the biggest offensive of the Allies since the war started, but even quiet warfare is bad enough.

*Voilà!* Out on call. Must stop. Such is life. Am in excellent health, and taking good care of myself. Don't worry about my taking extra risks. There are plenty enough in ordinary duty in this bloody sector.

*Very lovingly,*

HOUSTON

May 19th, 1917

*Dear Father:—*

I think I wrote Mother last, so I guess it's your turn for a letter. We are en repos now, and as everything is very indefinite and our division has moved, we are rather up in the air as to what will happen to us. Now that it is all over, I guess it's all right to mention a few names about where we have been, but I can't be too definite.

I reached Maffrecourt, near St. Meneshould, about half-way between Châlons and Verdun on April 1st. Section 13 was there catering to the lines around Maisons de Champagne, Beau Sejour, etc. If you have a good map of the Marne (district) you will see these places. Get a big map of the Marne, and you can trace all our way, as we have never left the district. The next day we left Maffrecourt and moved to Somme Bionne, ten kilometers—one kilo is five eighths of a mile. Stayed at Somme Bionne three days. Rained all the time when it wasn't snowing, and was horribly cold. That was where I caught a cold that put my stomach on the bum. Left at four o'clock one morning and arrived at Lepine (six kilos east of Châlons) at 6:30. Slept most all

day in sleeping bag on hay in barn as I was pretty low. Stayed about three days at Lepine, then moved to Champigneul, about half-way between Châlais and Epernay, south of the main road. Stayed here ten days almost, while our division recuperated, a few cars every day doing the rounds for the malades. One round took in Pocancy, St. Mard, Vouzy, Chaintrix, Châlais back to Champigneul. The other took in Athis, Falais, Aulnay, Matouges, Châlons.

Champigneul was a delightful spot. We were cantoned on a large farm, and lived the most comfortably of any place so far. Being way back of the lines we saw no real work, but spent a very pleasant week. Finally, the 14th of April, we packed up, leaving as much stuff as possible at Champigneul, and moved to Villers-Maruary, and here trouble, work, danger and excitement set in.

Villers is a village about ten kilos back of the lines. It is owned by Mumm, who makes the champagne, and as he is a German, the Boches had left it strictly alone. It was always full of troops, but never molested, thanks to Mr. Mumm. Our cantonment was pretty poor, and sleeping quarters rotten, but we were never there much, so it didn't matter an awful lot.

The night of the 14th I slept on the hard floor on the mezzanine of a rickety old barn, so was a little stiff in the morning, but *c'est la guerre*. The evening of the 15th Develin and I took a walk to a battery of the 155s in action. It was a long walk, and we returned tired and hot, looking forward to a good long sleep. I had put hay under my bag, and it felt awfully good when I turned in at eleven. Well, at twelve I was awakened by a terrific bombardment of the French guns, their famous tir de barrage, also simultaneously came a call for cars. I got up after my hour's sleep, and didn't get to bed again for two days and two nights, and worked every minute of that time, scarcely getting time to eat. I think I have described our work there already.

*May 29th*

Have been too busy to write before now. It's almost impossible. Will adopt new system.

## CARTE LETTRE

May — 1917

*Dear Mother:—*

I am going to use these little things hereafter for my letters. Have been through two attacks since letter headed May 19th. The Algerians took Mt. Cornillet at a terrific loss and the French have been advancing a few yards every day since. We have been getting the blessés of these attacks. The whole section is pretty fagged out. The work has been awfully heavy. Between loss of sleep and constant subjection to the Boches shell fire, my nerves are pretty jagged. Three nights ago the Boches bombarded the hospital where we were working. It was a terrible piece of barbarism, the deliberate slaughter of wounded in a hospital. Seventy-five men were killed outright, and many more wounded. Our lieutenant had his knee badly hit, and may have to have his leg amputated. Two Americans were wounded, though not badly. I escaped being hit several times by lying flat when I heard that the shell would land close, and the bits of steel went shrieking harmlessly over me. We added to our already splendid reputation by

sticking on the job throughout the bombardment while the French all sought shelter. Lots of men fell around us, but we weren't killed, luckily. The hospital has been removed, but should never have been so close to the lines.

*June 13th, 1917*

*Dear Mother:—*

Just received another letter from you this morning, and I must admit that you and Father are much better about writing letters than I am. It really takes pretty much of an effort to write from out here, though.

At last we are en repos. Seven weeks of incessant night-and-day rolling comprised our spell in Champagne. Many's the time we've all rolled forty-eight hours at a stretch, twenty-four hours without a wink of sleep is nothing to speak of now. We were attached to division after division—five altogether. We started work the 16th of April, before our division went into the trenches, and stayed for attack, attack, attack, until the 1st of June. One division would come, attack, wither, and go, then another, but we stayed on for five such divisions and about nine attacks. The night the Algerians and Moroccans took Mt. Cornillet, section 13 broke the record of the A. A. for carrying blessés between dusk and daylight. I greatly exceeded the section record myself by carrying eighty-three blessés assis in the camionette from Sept Saux



to Mourmelon Le Petit between daylight. It was at Sept Saux a couple of weeks or so later that the hospital was bombarded, and where the *croix de guerres* were won and the section received its citation. That certainly was a nightmare of a night. The Americans did better than the Frenchmen that night, and won such an excellent name for themselves that we have been offered to be attached to an attacking division—a great honor, never extended to any other A. A. section, but a very hazardous job.

I believe I have already written you about that bombardment. As for my own personal experiences, this diagram will best illustrate them:—

I was in the door of the assis hospital when the first shell landed, scattering mud and splinters of the shell on the camionette though not on me, for I had gotten behind the car, when I heard where the shell would land. My *blessés* were just on the point of climbing in, but they hesitated a few seconds. Then obus No. 2 arrived, but thank God didn't *éclat* (explode). The *blessés* in the hospital began to stir then, and about thirty seconds afterwards, when No. 3 fell, everyone cleared out the back door, and headed for the woods as hard as he could go. Men with broken arms, smashed ribs, banged up heads,

cripples of every description, suddenly became strong and fought for a way out. The fools lost their heads. All pushed for a place through the back door, resulting in delay, pain and confusion, when the front door lay perfectly open. My blessés took to their heels for the woods, and wouldn't get in my car. I grabbed two and tried to curse the others into the car, but to no avail. They were too frightened, and it was the luckiest thing in the world for them and me that they were, for had they gotten in my car, and we had started, shell No. 4, which landed just in front of the couché hospital, would have fallen right at our wheels, and every one of us blown to blighty. As it was I had just shut off my engine, and was wondering what to do since there were no blessés left to evacuate, when the shell landed and exploded with a prolonged and brilliant glare. By its flare I saw our own French lieutenant drop like lead with a horrible cry of pain, and at the same instant a French chauffeur standing beside him shivered, staggered and fell, with his head half severed at the neck, and an ugly jet of blood spurting out. The flare lasted several seconds, other men, who appeared more like shadows, dropped before it disappeared, the whole picture forming a ghastly, horrible sil-

houette I can never forget. Half sick and half dazed by what I had seen, I ran forward to assist our lieutenant, when the fifth shell dropped, and I had to throw myself flat in the mud to avoid the screaming steel splinters as they sang their way above and over me. I did not know what to do, and right then said the most sincere prayer of my whole life. I certainly prayed to God and prayed hard that night! Such things make a fellow pretty religious. Then I figured that since the Boches had the range so well, more shells would probably come, and that there was no use in remaining there with the chance of losing my life unnecessarily, when by waiting somewhere in comparative safety till the worst was over, I could return and be of just as much value and a good deal more than if I remained and got killed. This takes a long while to tell, but only a fraction of a second to think. I got up; ran to the door of the assis hospital, flashed my electric torch inside, saw that it was empty except two couchés lying helpless with broken legs on stretchers, didn't see how I could help them in any way, so climbed the small bank between the hospital and the road, and, just as I was descending the other side, the next shell crashed in right on the roof of the hospital exactly at the same spot where I had

been standing thirty seconds before. Two agonizing shrieks and groans told me that was the end of the two fellows I had just seen lying helplessly there. It was the second time that night I had missed death by thirty seconds. Sorry as I was for those two Algerians, I prayed once again, and thanked God I had gotten out of that hospital before death came hurtling through the roof. During the next seven minutes or so, I flattened myself against the slight bank which marks the difference in elevation between the road and canal tow-path, listening to the shells—they were big ones—come whistling in, and wondering where they would land. . . .

*Two days later*

. . . As usual it was impossible to finish. To finish hurriedly, as I have not much time even now, the Americans returned to the hospital before the bombardment was over, and long before any Frenchmen appeared. As a result of the whole affair, our lieutenant had to have both his legs amputated, one at the thigh; one of our boys was wounded in the head and had to have a piece of shell extracted, though he is quite all right now, and another one was wounded slightly in the leg—the second time in the month he had

COPY OF CITATION GIVEN TO SECTION NO. 13.

(SEAL)

ORDRE GÉNÉRAL No. 929

*Le Général GOURAUD, Commandant la IV<sup>ème</sup> Armée, cite à l'ordre de l'Armée, les militaires dont les noms suivent:*

La Section Sanitaire automobile américaine No. 13:

“Sous les ordres du sous-lieutenant RODOCANACHI, a assuré, pendant l'offensive d'Avril-Mai 1917, le service des évacuations dans un secteur fréquemment bombardé. Ses conducteurs de nationalité Américaine ont fait preuve de la plus grande endurance, de courage et de sang-froid, notamment, le 25 Mai, au cours de la relève et du transport des blessés, sous un bombardement meurtrier.”

*Le General Commandant la IV<sup>ème</sup> Armée*  
*GOURAUD*

Pour copie conforme

Le Chef du Service Automobile

(Signature)

*Le Lieutenant commandant la section certifie que le conducteur, Houston Woodward, était présent à la section pendant les opérations qui ont motivé la citation ci-contre.*



been hit. Both fellows received the anti-tetanus injection, and it is said will receive palms on their croix—the first ever given an A. A. man, I think, but couldn't swear to. Our lieutenant received the Legion of Honor, and the croix de guerre with two palms—a magnificent tribute, but a poor substitute for a pair of legs.

Section 13 men are the pride of the A. A. now. Permissionaires said that in Paris a tremendous fuss was made over them, and people could not do enough for them.

June 19th, 1917

Dear Father:—

Don't know how long I will have to write, so will make it brief.

The pictures I took with the camera you thought was so extravagantly bought. It is an excellent camera, as you can see, though these pictures are but a sample of many I have taken. I wish now I had taken a lot more than I did. I had some magnificent opportunities for remarkable photographs, but either did not have my camera with me or it would not be ready, or something else would prevent. I certainly have some very interesting experiences to look back upon.

Life is awfully quiet now. We are in a very quiet sector after our sojourn in the hellish Mt. Cornillet district. Mt. Cornillet is as bad as, if not worse than, Verdun, though, of course, there are not the massed attacks and counter attacks there were at the "gate of France." After the war—a very charming and musical phrase—I can tell you some awfully interesting things about this Mt. Cornillet. At the present time it is rather *défendu*, though it would be the best thing



in the world for America if she could realize a few very unpleasant but important truths.

A tremendous amount rests on America. She is all important. Her importance cannot be over-emphasized. But she has got to go into this war with the same spirit she would have if Germany were attacking her alone with all her strength. This is a very grim business, and it is growing grimmer every day. We shall see one whole year more of this war, and don't you or any one else think we won't. Another winter campaign? Winter be darned. They are going right on with this business for months and months, as people on this side of the water realize. Why? This is a war against the military autocrats of Prussia, and if Germany wins this war,—and believe me, they are by no means half-crushed yet,—good-by forever to peace, quiet, and happiness in this world to the next war, when you will find the world prepared and ready to crush them. Germany has the men. There are more men in her army today than ever before. She has plenty of food to subsist on. She is not short of munitions by any means. She has wonderful officers—is still mighty, mighty strong. And it is going to take every ounce of effort that blind, sleepy, slacking America can muster, to lick the Boches.

You all talk fine in America, lots of singing, flag waving, speeches and all that sort of thing. We see your papers—now let's see you get down to work and *do* something! Words are cheap in this world. For God's sake *act*, and act quickly, or it will be too late! If only the censor would permit things to be published in America. The United States can't know the truth, the censor won't let it, but I wish I had the power to go to America and let the people know there just how things stand. The things we could tell you, we, who have seen horribly disturbing things here at the front. Sometimes I shudder, and feel it's all up, no use, America is five months too late. And it may yet be *too late*. Many people depressedly feel so. I know my family is doing its share, but rouse those who aren't. It is a detriment sometimes not to know and be told the truth.

You are very wise growing vegetables in your gardens. Nothing silly or funny about it. Very useful and necessary work. And above all—*make and send artillery*. Artillery is winning the war for the English. The French lost thousands trying to capture Vimy Ridge. The Canadians walked up the hill with their rifles slung over their backs, and when they got to the top, there was not a Boche apparent in sight. Why?

Artillery for days had pounded the Boche trenches into shapeless mud, artillery had bottled the Boche in their abris, a solid sheet of sleeting steel had prevented ravitaillement and supports from coming up the support roads, and when the Canadians appeared they found only corpses or starved, frightened soldiers.

*Days later*

I have just read this letter through, and realize I wrote it in a depressed mood about the war. The things are true though, and an awful lot depends on America.

Have to run. Will send pictures later. Received cable, letters, and Mrs. Binney's stockings, which are fine. I am wearing them now, and will write my thanks when I get a chance. Am very well.

*Love,*

HOUSTON

POST CARD

*July 18th, 1917*

*Dear Mother:—*

This is a most delightful spot. Can't tell you how pretty. There is swimming, golf, tennis, riding, motoring—everything in fact. An awfully smart crowd is here now, so life is very interesting. It's such a relief to get away from the cloud which always hangs over you in the war zone. No guns are heard here, and you can breathe in safety without fearing to be bumped off any minute. I return to Paris today after a four day visit here.

*Very lovingly,*

HOUSTON

*Deauville-La-Plage-Fleurie*



A SNAPSHOT OF HOUSTON  
IN AMBULANCE DRIVER'S UNIFORM AT DEANVILLE



*July 25th, 1917*

*Dear Father:—*

I haven't time for a lengthy letter now, but a short one will suffice.

I am now in the Franco-American Aviation Corps, at school in Avord, Cher, France. I was very anxious to get in this corps, but found that if I waited till August 19th before joining I could not get in, as they would already be full. As it was, I was about the last man whose application was accepted by the French Government, so it was a matter of ambulance for three weeks more at the sacrifice of aviation, or aviation at the sacrifice of the A. A. There were thirty-two men in our section at the time, ten more than we carried in the Champagne, and the work was very quiet, so my services were not much needed. We are in the Foreign Legion, aviation branch, regular members of the French Army. There are about one hundred and fifty Americans at the school here now, which is more than they have ever had in before. They are an awfully nice crowd who have joined recently, many of them old ambulance men. I knew a lot before coming down, so feel quite at home already.

Notice my new address and send all mail there.

There is talk of the United States Government taking us over soon, but the only advantage I can see is that we will then be given a commission in the American Army and draw good pay. I am here for three or four months, which is less than usual as they are speeding up instruction more than they used to. Charlie Kinsolving is about the only other fellow here you know. There's also quite a Yale representation.

Please send immediately the \$1,200 you sold the Stutz for,—that will last easily until next March. There's lots of ways of spending money. The food is miserable, so we usually buy our meals. Uniforms cost something also. Later when I have more time I will write more on this subject.

On a rough guess, I should say I ought to get to the front again—with an aeroplane, not a Ford—in between four and five months.

Don't forget the money for I need it badly.

*Hastily,*

HOUSTON

*Ecole D'Aviation Militaire,  
Avord, Cher, France*



*August 6th, 1917*

*Dear Mother:—*

At last I feel I have time to write a letter long enough to let you know a bit about what has been going on recently.

In the first place, I severed diplomatic relations with the A. A. July 23rd, and came to Avord July 24th. I wanted to stay in the section till August 19th, but found that if I did I could not get into French Aviation, so considered it useless and foolish to sacrifice aviation for three weeks of A. A. work in St. Meneshould, where there is almost nothing doing, and since there were more than enough men in the section already. Since coming here my only regret has been that I did not leave the ambulance two weeks sooner. Jim Develin will be home about the 1st of September, and he can explain in person much better than I can write the whole state of affairs. I have grown thoroughly disgusted with the ambulance. The crowd who have come over since America declared war are a wretched bunch of émbusques, have disgraced themselves and America in Paris, and are of no account at all. All but a very few of the old Sec. 13 have left, the new crowd doesn't

compare with them, and I am extremely glad I am down here.

Maybe you think by this that I regret my A. A. experience. Not a bit of it. I consider the time I served at the front the best I have ever lived. I shall always look back upon my A. A. life with the greatest of pleasure and satisfaction, but it grieves me terribly to see how the A. A. has gone to the dogs, recently. Enough on this subject. Jim Develin can tell you all about it when he returns to America.

And now I come to a subject, which, though not pleasant to talk about, must be met squarely in the face. I am now in aviation and all that that means. You haven't seen for yourself, so don't know, but I have seen and know. I don't want to scare you, and shall be as decent as possible about it, but it is only fair to tell you of the dangers, and after speaking of them this once we won't refer to them again. But just remember this war is the biggest thing so far in history, and no one in the world really has a right to refrain from doing his utmost, down to the giving up of his life. I may live through it all, of course, lots of aviators do, but an aviator's life isn't worth an awful lot the way things are done now. I prefer not to worry you more than I can help, however.

Some day when I am not so hot and sleepy I will write describing the school thoroughly. Just at present I'm getting so sleepy I don't see how I can possibly go on.

I get up at 4:15 every morning, attend flying class from six till eight, drill at 11:15, and fly again in evening from 6:30 till 8:30. So far I have had about thirty sorties, or flights, in a dual control Caudron bi-plane, and now do all the work myself except the landing, which I will begin on tomorrow.

Am getting so awfully sleepy I can't go on any more, sorry, but will write soon again.

Am very well, but pretty tired owing to exceedingly irregular eating and sleeping hours.

*Very lovingly,*

HOUSTON

*August 13th, 1917*

*Dear Father:—*

I have gotten yours and Mother's letters all in a bunch lately, and have been surprised to hear you have not received some of my letters, for I wrote more frequently than you indicate.

I am pretty nearly ready to be laché now. Which reminds me, I haven't described the school yet. It is the largest aviation school in the world here at Avord, having about 1,000 machines, representing nearly every type made. There are two courses of instruction, the Bleriot and the Caudron. In the Bleriot the élève pilote is first put on a Penguin, a Bleriot monoplane with its wings so clipped it cannot possibly leave the ground. This machine is very difficult to learn to control, but it teaches the student how to steer on the ground—quite a knack when driving a Nieuport. Next you are laché to the "roller" class. These "rollers" also are Bleriotics with their wings partially clipped, permitting the machine to leave the ground only a very few feet. Next one advances to the Decollet class—also partially clipped Bleriotics—permitting altitudes of forty feet, then the student

is put on a Bleriot monoplane—the most difficult of all machines to fly. When brevetted on a Nieuport he is some pilot after the Bleriot training. The advantages of the Bleriot school are twofold. The pilot always is alone—never goes up with a monitor, and hence is on his own resources and initiative from the beginning—and, second, the Bleriot is the most difficult machine to fly.

The other training is the Caudron school. The élève learns to fly on a Caudron bi-plane with a monitor. As this course is much quicker I have chosen it, because I want to return to the front as soon as possible. The first three sorties I was merely observing passenger; then I gradually took over the controls. The air work is very easy; so is leaving the ground and using the throttle. Landing is very difficult to learn. I am now doing all the work myself, but sometimes make pretty poor landings. Of course the monitor is always ready to grab the controls in case I make a mistake. It is surprising how easy single flying is. Flying is the greatest sport in the world. I love it, and think I ought to get away with it pretty well. I am longing for the time when I can drive my own Nieuport and do all the loops, vrilles, spirals, renversements, barrel turns,

and other tricks. I went as passenger in a dual-control Nieuport, and never had such thrills in my life. It's the most fascinating sport ever invented. I shall write more of flying from time to time as I progress.

Immediately the war is over I am going to Russia as private secretary to Baron F. and shall act in that capacity for at least a year, maybe many more. I don't believe I have ever mentioned the Baron to you (I have never been able to describe one-tenth of the things I have done here in France); he is a direct nephew or grand nephew or something of Tolstoi, and also of the Count F. Macauley writes of in his "French Revolution." He is the most extraordinary, brilliant, and interesting man I have ever met or "heard tell of." I haven't time now to tell you about him personally. I met him last March, have seen him in Paris, and through him have met two Russian princesses, one of them the most famous portrait painter of Russia, and one of the foremost of the world—a Hindoo princess, an opera composer, one of France's best authors. But these are only the celebrities; in addition I have met the most interesting people imaginable, among them the Russian captain who was in command of the troops guarding the Czar in his



my Russian Friend,  
Count Fersen.

Taken at Bouvray,  
in the Forêt de Fontaine-  
bleau. The cross in-  
dicates the spot where  
Napoleon met the pope.





palace from the crowds in the early days of the Russian revolution. His account of the revolution was extraordinary. This is uncertain gossip now, and not to be taken too certainly. Russia is pretty sure to be an empire again. No Romanoff will ever be Czar, and even now many people are beginning to look to a certain man who represents the original royal family before the Romanoffs, and who will probably be czar or king modified some day. That isn't too sure, however. Nothing is ever sure in Russia at present.

B. Fersen asked me to be his private secretary. I took a long while in deciding, but am glad I said Yes. I am not going back to America at any rate. Europe has done more for me in education, development, experience, and pleasure in five months than America has in five years. I feel European, and men are needed here now terribly. More of all this later.

*Lovingly,*

HOUSTON

*August 17th, 1917*

*Dear Mother:—*

Today a lot of mail came in which had been delayed in A. A. section, and inspired me to write, though as usual I haven't much time. This paper comes from an excellent little Y. M. C. A. which has been established here at Avord.

Aviation is the greatest sport in the world. It appeals to me more than anything I have ever attempted. I am now flying myself, always accompanied by a monitor in case something goes wrong. By that I mean I do all the work myself. It's wonderful. Had a great little joy ride the other day, climbing above the clouds and spiraling most the way down in a very small diameter. Am very enthusiastic about it, despite the fact that it is very boring hanging around doing nothing in bad weather, which I fear will hold us all up longer than expected.

Everything is awfully upset now. The American Army is taking over everything, but very few want to be transferred. Thirty fellows left Avord for the training camp for Americans at Tours. They were all in the Bleriot school, but the Bleriot training is being stopped by the

French, so the men were sent to the Caudron school at Tours. I want to stay at Avord, as I am nearly ready to be laché (fly alone), but the lieutenant over us said he was afraid I couldn't. We will all be given commissions in the American Army, but I would rather be a sergeant with the French than a first lieutenant with the Americans. However, we will receive much more pay in the United States Army. The Franco-American Aviation Corps ceases to exist from today, and I am very sorry and disappointed. In a few months I suppose I shall be Lieutenant Woodward, U. S. Signal Corps, but I would rather be Sergeant Woodward, *pilote, Armée Française*. At any event, I shall still be an aviator, and that is the main thing.

I had entertained hopes of getting home for a week or two at Christmas, and then returning to the front, since I would have by then served ten months in the French Army. But the Americans stepping in have gummed the game, so now I fear I can't get home until the end of the war unless I am wounded, which God forbid.

Believe me, I need your prayers now, so don't get discouraged, or think that God is getting tired of keeping my neck safe. I just hope he lets me live through this confounded war, for I

am beginning to long for some real work and a more or less settled life now, neither of which I have ever wanted before.

Baron F. has written saying I can visit you a while before going to Russia. I expect to get a tremendous lot out of my position under him. He is an extraordinary man, and I will break my neck to make good with him, so am trying to improve my French, and have sent for a Russian history to study as mere essential preparations. He is going to teach me Russian, and between his personal instructions and constant contact with Russians I ought to pick it up pretty quickly. I get along pretty well in French now, having a pretty good vocabulary—*Mais ma prononciation est encore très Américaine. Ce pendant je le sais assez bien pour parler d'aucun sujet, et aussi pour écrire des lettres comme ceci.*

Everything continues to go well. Notice changed address and notify Ledger.

Haven't enough money to cable weekly.

Very lovingly,

HOUSTON

*Centré d'aviation Militaire de Juvisy*

*August 24th, 1917*

*Dear Mother:—*

This is great.

At last we're treated like men, not dogs.

After nearly a month at Avord—which is a name synonymous for boredom, desert, and rotten food—we arrived here today to continue our training on the Caudron. It seems almost too good to be true. Juvisy is only a few moments ride from Paris, we sleep on feather mattresses instead of dirty straw, the food is quite good, this is a very comfortable foyer—bar, piano, and writing facilities—and we get a repos every third seance, with official permission to go to Paris twice every week and unofficially we can go whenever we want and get away with it. We could practically live in Paris and commute for flying, but of course will stick close to business in order to get brevetted and go to the front as soon as possible.

The captain commanding the school is very enthusiastic about America and Americans, so I foresee a very pleasant stay here for a few weeks. Have been to Paris for two twenty-four hour visits within the last week, and enjoyed them magnificently. What is the fascination of that

city? It isn't nearly as gay as it was before the war, but I love it more than any United States city, and have enjoyed myself more there than in any other spot in the world. Have never had a dull or bored moment in the town, and now know quite a large collection of people. Yesterday the Baron and I strolled for three hours in the afternoon all through the Bois de Bologne, he doing nearly all the talking. The more I see of that man the more I admire the extraordinary knowledge, cleverness, and conception of the man. He is the most remarkable and advanced personality I have ever come in contact with. His plans for the future are gigantic, and as the fortune he controls is nearly as large as his plans, and his intellect and ability greater than either, he's going to make something hum in a few years. I expect I shall get more out of three years contact with him than most people learn and experience during their whole existence. It will be awfully hard work, but extremely interesting.

Why don't you tell Stanley to go in aviation if it appeals to him. I have changed my mind about whom I think make the good aviators. I used to think it was the reckless, devil-may-care sort of fellow who was the best, but I have found that it is the cool-headed, cunning type that do

good work more than the careless ones. Nerve is the first requisite, brains the second, but if either is lacking, it is impossible to be a good flyer. You have to think and act awfully quickly—it generally is a matter of life or death in air fighting, who can think quickest—but at the same time keep a cool head and under no circumstances permit yourself to be excited. If Stanley goes into aviation now—there are lots of boys as young and younger than he in it (a German aviator of thirteen years was brought down in the last raid)—he can get to the front. It's the most interesting and only sporty side of the war. The aviators are a privileged class and are the pets of Paris, and can often get repos. Then the result of future fighting will depend more and more on the aviation. If the Boches can be prevented from ever crossing the lines—which is not hard, merely a mathematical problem of numerical superiority at present—or even better, can be kept out of the air altogether, they cannot possibly do efficient fighting. Artillery is everything—but is rendered blind and useless nearly except in stopping an attack, if their avions can't direct them. And vast numbers are needed. Machines never fly alone any more over the lines. They always go in groups, and attack in com-



binations. This combination game will be a big part of future fighting. Even now air fights in combinations are rehearsed behind the lines, and think of the future of this air strategy. Thus you see aviators are greatly needed. Piano is banging, men singing and rough-housing, can't concentrate to write more.

*Lovingly,*

HOUSTON



*September 9th, 1917*

*Dear Mother:—*

Aviation is coming along all right. I am flying alone in a Caudron, Gnome motor, and find it excellent sport as ever. The French lost two hundred and sixty aviators during August, two hundred through accidents at the front, thirty at schools, and thirty brought down by the Boches. Several Americans also were brought down. Julian Biddle was killed and fell into the channel with his Spad. Harold Willis, one of the best in the Lafayette Escadrille, was lost during combat at Verdun in the last great offensive. Doolittle and Reno were brought down badly damaged, but living. Chadwick was killed, while Chatkoff received thirty-six mitrailleuse wounds but retained consciousness long enough to land his machine, and is expected to live.

I put in an application to remain with the French Army, for I wish to go to the front in a French escadrille, get the training there this winter, and transfer over to the United States Army in the spring. I could go over to the American Army now as first lieutenant. Most the boys did, but I have many reasons for wishing to wait.

If I make particularly good this winter, I have a chance to go over as a captain in the spring.

Thank Quita for her letter. I have made a will here leaving the shares in the peat company to her in case I am killed by this confounded war, and they will be very valuable some day.

If only Wilson had declared war six months sooner! How badly the American Army is needed now. I am glad we stayed out for two years, but it was a tremendous crime to have played neutral longer. Am still at Juvisy, and am awfully anxious to get to Biarritz for a few days at the end of the month.

Am very well, but a little weak owing to a slight case of malaria I had for three or four days. Don't know how I got it, but the chills and fever were very annoying. Flew as usual, but felt always tired and weak. Am perfectly well again now.

*Much love,*

HOUSTON

*September 11th, 1917*

*Dear Father:—*

You and Mother have both told me to have pictures sent. I never had a regular photograph taken, but here are two pictures Charlie took when I was at Deauville with him. We had an awfully good time there; the swimming was wonderful. Biarritz is my next rest objective, and Nice and the Riviera next winter.

Have written Stanley to join aviation.

There is a new rule now by censor that no mail can leave country with address of expéditeur on outside, so it is really better to stamp letters.

Aviation is progressing as slow as ever. Between unfavorable weather and French inefficiency one would think we would never get out. It is going unnecessarily slowly. Haven't received letters from home for some time except four in a batch from Mother which had been delayed in the A. A. section. Send mail to Morgan-Harjes Co., Boulevard Haussmann, Paris.

Pictures aren't good, but the best I can offer. Sorry, but when I get brevet I'll have a regular picture taken.

Fellow was killed here day or two ago. Must

have fainted in air judging from way machine behaved. Have seen quite a number of fatal accidents now, but it is queer how quickly we mortals forget things. Spend most of my time in Paris with Count F. There are more Americans and Britains than French almost in the capital. *Ça va bien*, and hope to be brevetted before long.

*With much love,*

HOUSTON

CABLE

*October 2, 1917*

Brevetted yesterday.

PILOTE WOODWARD

TWO PICTURE POST CARDS OF OLD BUILDINGS  
IN PROVINS

*Provins, Sept. 29th, 1917*

*Dear Mother:—*

Flew here from Etampes this morning, on triangle for brevet. Fly back to Juvisy this evening and will try to make altitude test en route (2,000 metres). Very rough trip, air extremely bumpy and clouds very low.

HOUSTON

*Provins, Sept. 29th, 1917*

*Dear Father:—*

Flew to Etampes from Juvisy this A. M.—sixty kilometres. Flew from Etampes to here, one hundred and ten kilos. Great sport, but awfully bumpy. Was turned completely over by wind once, on side, that is. Scared me awfully. Clouds at six hundred metres high.

HOUSTON

POST CARD

*Bois de Roi,  
October 9th, 1917*

*Dear Mother:—*

Am on a permission of twelve days before going to Avord for perfection on a Nieuport. Was very tired and nerves somewhat upset, so wanted to rest a while in the country. Went to a little spot called Bourra on the south edge of the Forêt de Fontainebleau on Saturday afternoon with Count Fersen.

You wouldn't like this place. It's ugly from outside, and too fantastically ornate inside. We walked from Bourra to Bois le Roi during the day, stopping at Fontainebleau for lunch. It was a distance of fifteen miles, and made from one end of the forest to the other. Was just what I needed and feel much better for it.

*October 16th, 1917*

*Dear Mother:—*

I can't begin to tell you half the things I have been doing since last writing, but probably you will be interested in hearing a little about my brevet.

Juvisy was such an awfully comfortable and altogether pleasant school, and so very near Paris, that no one was in a hurry to get through, for we all well knew we would be never again so comfortable and enjoy ourselves so much during the rest of the war as while there, so we made the most of it. After spending more time in Paris than at the school, I was eventually laché (flying alone) the 11th of September. One then flies with a seven-cylinder Gnome motor instead of the Anzani. Being a rotative, the avion is consequently much lighter, thus easier to land. Eight tours de piste were necessary before advancing to the next piste. I was very, very careful my first flight alone, you may be sure. It was just like flying with the monitor, however, so it doesn't make one nervous. Strange to say, I think I made the best atterrissage I have ever made on my first laché flight. I soon grew confident and

tired of straight, simple work, so stuck in a few changements de direction and hairpins towards my last four or five flights. My last flight I took a little joy ride round a dirigible a few kilos away, and ended in a tight hairpin directly over the piste.

The next piste in advance was to perfect our air work a bit, and make a changement de direction. We didn't stay there long, making seventeen or eighteen flights, then went down to the cuvette for brevet work. The first thing to do was to make three epingles de cheveu (hairpins) and a spiral. These were all easy as they weren't supposed to be a bit tight. All the work hitherto had been more or less monotonous, but now the most interesting part was to begin.

To win the brevet, one has to make two petit voyages, an atterrissage en campagne and two triangles, and an altitude test.

The first petit voyage was very simple. We went up the Seine to a town called Corbeil, turned without landing, and came back. It was very fine weather, so I climbed quite high, and peaked practically all the way home. Peaking means to coast with the motor either cut or reduced. The next day we were to make our second petit voyage to Etampes and back. The weather was unfavorable, misty, and clouds very low, but it was



getting near the end of September, and they always want to turn out as many pilots as possible for each month, and we were to try to finish before October 1st. I hung low and followed the railway all the way to Etampes. It was very rough going, and my baragraph looked like the teeth of a saw. Coming back was better. I knew the country then, and always could have the Seine as a landmark, so got up above the clouds, and saw the land quite blurredly and intermittently. It was one of the most beautiful sights I have ever seen. The clouds glistened beautifully in the sun and made a marvelous picture in the west with the sinking rays so pink and red. Man has never produced anything which gives the impression of billowy softness those clouds give. I had one thrilling experience. I was peaking down to get below the clouds near home when suddenly a puff struck my left wing and turned me over like a flash. I came bursting out of the clouds in a wing slip, dove into it to get out, and found myself plunging straight for another machine just below me. There really wasn't much danger, for my avion was in control, but the fellow was pretty scared when he saw me diving for him, and I had quite a thrill myself. Clouds are very rough and bumpy affairs.

The next thing to do was to make an atter-rissage en campagne. This was easy, for they sent me to Melun, where I picked out a good field and landed without difficulty. Left the appareil in charge of the gendarme, and went to mail the postal to the school and have my papers signed at the Mairie. When I got back I found hundreds of people, mostly children, gathered around my machine, so took their picture. They were pretty much scared of the avion, so after rising and making a turn I dove straight down on top of them, redressing above their heads, and shot up into the air again. Some of them threw themselves on the ground, and I could hear a few scream before I put on the motor again. I turned around and waved in reply to their waves and dropped my handkerchief as a souvenir. The last I saw was a crowd running forward to get it.

The next thing on the program was the first triangle.

*(Day later)*

Four of us started out together for Etampes. The weather was poor, clouds lying very low. At Etampes we had our papers signed and sat around about three-fourths of an hour eating chocolate and beer. We then started out for Provins, but only two of us got there, one having engine





De Mello Vieira, Alan Winslow, Rouanet, & myself standing in front of my Caudron at the Farman school of Etampes.

The uniform is my aviation fatigue hat, Abercrombie & Fitch muffler, mother gave me, leather coat, khaki breeches, & cavalry boots. We all wore our fur combination suits that day, but became very scattered on our way to Provins.

This is the machine in which I made my altitude test & moonlight flight over outskirts of darkened Paris

trouble, and the other descending to remain with him. It was much easier than I expected. Owing to low cloud-line I flew all the way at about only 1,000 metres, and had no trouble following roads beyond LaFerté, when I shook off roads and hit across country by compass till I got to the Seine. Struck it at Melun, which was what I aimed for. Had no difficulty in following roads to Provins, but it was  $1\frac{1}{3}$  hours trip, and I was very glad to get down, as the rudder post was not built for my long legs, and I was consequently quite cramped. Had an excellent lunch, and we loafed around till five o'clock, when we set out on last leg for Juvisy.

For the altitude test we have to remain above 2,000 metres (6,500 feet) for an hour. If we do it on a triangle in the same day we get twenty-four hours extra permission after being brevetted. As the weather was bad we had decided not to try for height that day, so left quite late. When in the air, though, I thought it would be quite a stunt to do the altitude, so when I almost reached the Seine I climbed immediately from 1,400 to 2,000 metres. It was just a quarter to six when I reached 2,000, so I had to remain there till a quarter of seven. At 2,200 I lost complete sight of the ground, and didn't get a single glimpse of

it again for fifty-five minutes. Consequently I had no idea at all where in the world I was, but I didn't care as long as I came down in France. I wanted to climb as high as possible, but it was so damp that the engine did not run as well as it might, so I couldn't climb fast. The clouds were a solid bank of mist far below me, and I couldn't penetrate them once with my eyes. At 6:45 the barograph touched 3,000 metres (about 10,000 feet) and, although I could have climbed higher, I didn't dare, for the sun set at 6:40, and at seven it would be quite dark. I could still see it, but knew it had set from the ground. There had been a very strong northeast wind blowing, so I had been going back and forth north and south by compass when I judged I had arrived over Juvisy.

I had passed the altitude test, so I reduced the motor all the way and shot down. I came down so fast that my head seemed to have a terrific pressure. My eyes hurt, and I thought the vein in the bridge of my nose would burst, so straightened out in *ligne de vol* till the pain relented a little. It had gotten pretty dark, and I didn't recognize the country, so came straight down to ask the way. The wind had carried me west of Paris. I landed in a field where some women were working, and found that the Bugue aviation

field was not far away,—about ten or eleven miles. They pointed the direction, I set it by compass, and went up to look for the aerodrome, being guided only by compass. It had by now grown dark, but there was a full moon, and I could make out the country by its light when I flew low. Several times while passing over forests I was anxious lest the motor should panne, but it ran splendidly. It was great sport flying by moonlight, but a little mist started to hang over the earth, and I decided to come down before it would be too difficult to find a good landing ground. Just then I saw a Caudron lying smashed on the field below me, so made a quick turn, shut off the gas, and came down. It proved to be a comrade who had become lost and smashed. A truck took his machine back to camp, but I spent the night at a little inn, stopped in for a visit at the Bugue aviation field in the morning, and hastened to Juvisy, whither I arrived without further incident about nine o'clock.

Have to stop. Was highly commended by the commandant for making the altitude so late and in such weather. Am now at Avord, but expect to go to Pau soon.

*Lovingly,*

HOUSTON



*Avord, October 18th, 1917*

*Dear Father:—*

I might as well continue the last letter I wrote to Mother now. I described everything but the last triangle. As it was the last day of September, and the school wanted to put through as many as possible that month, they sent me away on my last triangle, over exactly the same course as the first one. Consequently it was very easy to follow the country, but the wind was blowing quite a gale from the N. E. The leg from Etampes to Provins took  $2\frac{1}{4}$  hours of very hard flying, fighting the rough air every foot of the way. It wasn't so bad going to the Seine, but here I came down to seven hundred or eight hundred metres, and several times I thought I would have to land and wait for the wind to die down a bit. I tried to climb, feeling sure that it would be much smoother above 1,200 metres or 1,300 metres, but I couldn't get up for it was so rough that the wind each time I tried blew me over vertically, and I had to dive hard into the wing slip to regain my *ligne de vol*. It was very hard, tiring work, no fun at all, and I didn't enjoy it a bit. It was simply a matter of throwing the



marsh from one side to the other the entire time, and my arm became awfully tired. When finally I landed I wanted to get down and kiss the ground, and you may be sure I waited till quite late before starting for home. The voyage back was very pleasant; I just hit across country by compass, and it was a great relief to have half-decent weather.

The notes on my work while at the school were very gratifying. They showed them to me, and translated into English they run "very good pilot, very good disposition, excellent brevet, perfect conduct, very plucky." Two days extra were granted me on permission for my record. Thus I had a permission for eleven days, seven regularly given, and two for work on brevet, and two for journey to Biarritz and back and then to Avord. I had originally intended to go to London, but didn't want to bother with all the red tape necessary to get a passport. Then I arranged to go to Biarritz, but had such an awfully good time in Paris that I couldn't tear myself away. I did go to the Forest of Fontainebleau with the Russian, and we passed three very pleasant and very restful days walking through the woods. I feel I have learned more from him already than all the time passed in college—in the literary line, that is.

One day we walked from Bourron to Bois le Roi, traversing the breadth of the whole forest, about fifteen or sixteen miles. At Fontainebleau we went through the chateau and had lunch. There are many junior United States officers studying artillery there.

Have been flying Nieuports. Very fast machines. Two American aviators were killed two days ago. One here and one at Plessy.

*Lovingly,*

HOUSTON

*American Y. M. C. A., Avord*

*October 29th, 1917*

*Dear Mother:—*

In the first place let me thank you for the passe montagne, or woolen helmet, as I suppose you would call it. It is absolutely perfect—good looking, warm and a very practical model. It fits my head perfectly, and I like particularly the bit coming down in front, which keeps the chest warm, or at least protected from the wind. I wear it under the cork helmet the French Army makes us wear, and I can assure you it is of the greatest service. Brown is the color probably the most becoming to me, so you showed good taste in that respect, the wool makes it very warm and the shape is the most practical. I am rather curious to know where you got the idea, and how you knew we wore passe montagnes.

Am flying a little Nieuport machine now, and like it tremendously. It is very fast, strongly made, and very sensitive. Some two years ago it was the best machine at the front, but has now been completely replaced by the speedier Spad for over-the-line chasse work, and never crosses the lines any more. It is a since-the-war-machine and though now obsolete at the front, is far

superior to any American machine. Such is the progress of aviation depuis la guerre.

Father reproaches me for not having sent any photograph,—I couldn't, for I have never had any taken. Am enclosing one made at the Farman school at Etampes, which was one of the points on our triangle. One of the boys is Alan Winslow, a great friend of mine while at Yale, and one of Charlie Blackwell's room-mates. Charlie, by the way, was sous-chef of the Yale Section, which was in the Vosges and at Verdun. He is now commissioned in a clerk's job in aviation. Poor fellow, he can't fly on account of his eyes and heart, and is very disappointed.

Am beginning to long for a permission home to see you all a little while again, but am not going to take any lengthy leave till after doing something at the front.

*Very lovingly,*

HOUSTON

*Pau, November 15th, 1917*

*Dear Father:—*

I am terribly ashamed of myself for not writing more often, and have no excuse to offer except unindustrious negligence. Unfortunately, when I do write these spasmodic letters, I can't put in one half of the things I should like to.

My flying has progressed tremendously. I am in no hurry, however, and am taking lots of time in the schools, and just as long permissions as I can between transfers. Then the weather has been extremely unfavorable. Avord is a wretched place. Mud and dreariness everywhere, especially in dull weather. I fared quite well there, though, by hiring a room in a little shed down town which had an excellent bed. The French always have good beds.

Pau is delightful. Situated at the base of the Pyrenees on a little river, it is very pretty. The hotel is ultra modern, the casino—Henry IV's old chateau—is very attractive, but "fermé pendant la guerre." The esplanade makes an extremely beautiful promenade with its mountainous background, and the city itself is quite lively and attractive. There is a very fashionable American

colony, and the tourists are beginning to immigrate for the winter season, attracted at present by the horse races. I have been down town quite a lot, and find it quite delightful. *On s'amuse très bien à Pau*, and we have all grown very fond of it. I like it better than Deauville or Trouville. Much more beautiful, and very bracing air. I am having such an awfully good time here that I am purposely lingering rather than getting back to the cold north and the front.

The first stunt we had to do outside the monotonous tour de piste was the vertical spiral on the eighteen-metre Nieuport. In the vertical spiral the machine is tipped up vertically on the wings, thus the rudder becomes the elevating plane, and the elevating plane becomes the rudder. It is a real sensation, and if prolonged for many turns makes one quite dizzy. I made my three in the eighteen-Nieuport all right, and then two in the fifteen-metre Nieuport, but my third, here I was too ambitious to make it very tight, and consequently shot up in the air each attempt, making a renversement and vrille by mistake. The Nieuports are wonderful machines. For a long while they were the best chasse machine at the front, but have now been completely replaced by the swifter Spads. They literally run them-

selves. Today I went from 2,500 metres to 4,500 (15,000 feet) without touching the manche à balai (joystick, controller) once, correcting bumps with the rudder. They keep perfect *ligne de vol* at 1,150 revolutions, and on a still day you can put your hands in your pockets and the machine takes care of itself. You can come out of absolutely everything by merely putting all controls in the middle, peaking into a nose dive, and redressing into *ligne de vol*. It's all great sport, but not so full of thrills as might be expected—or else we're used to it.

You once asked me my first impressions of flying. I remember all very distinctly. My first three rides in double command with the monitor, I was rather anxious and thought I should never be able to learn to fly. There seemed to be so many things to do, and it was so utterly different from anything else I ever did. I was quite scared when he put it in a steep bank and peaked sharply to the ground. My next three rides in the afternoon I found to my astonishment that I was doing nearly all the air work alone, and flying all of a sudden seemed very easy. Gradually I learned to roll her on the ground, to take off, how to climb, to use the throttle, and then to land. For a beginner the landing is everything. It is quite



difficult to master, but once mastered never gives much more trouble. Capotages (summersaults on the ground) are very frequent on the Nieuport, however. You generally see from two to five every day in the schools. I have been very lucky in not having had any so far, but I knock wood violently when I say that.

To continue about impressions. Flying immediately becomes a fascinating sport to the beginner, and he wants to be in the air all the time. Gradually, however, he begins to grow tired of the monotonous tours de piste, and grows weary of having the monitor there scrapping with him and interfering with letting him fly as he wants (generally a very wise interference). Then the Great Day comes, and the pupil is laché, or flies alone. Aviation then suddenly takes on a new life and interest, but the monotonous tours de piste again begin to bore. Then as he masters the rudiments alone he gets freer, does serpentes, hairpins, changes of direction, and then sets out on the brevet test, a sample one of which I described to you in a previous letter. This is generally good fun, especially if the pilot lands now and then in chateaux, where he can spend a day or two as a royal guest, pretending a "panne," or break down. I couldn't go in for this side



issue as they were keen on brevetting me by the end of the month, and I considered the extra two days granted in Paris better than two days in a chateau.

The early Nieuport work I found required great care and vigilance, they are so fast and sensitive. One misslip close to the ground is very dangerous. You see the average speed of the machines we drive now is one hundred and twenty-five miles an hour, so one must be very careful. I feel quite at home in one now, but don't risk chances yet. The Spad goes at one hundred and sixty miles an hour, and I suppose that by the end of the war we will have airplanes travelling at the rate of two hundred miles an hour. These are, of course, the monoplace chasse machines, and their drivers are the élite of the French Flying Corps.

My three-hour flight this afternoon was rather interesting owing to the beauty of the Pyrenees. I was 4,000 metres (13,000 feet) skimming the crest of about half the entire range. The tallest peak turned out to be 3,800 metres, so you can see they are pretty respectable mountains. Covered with snow, they are easily the prettiest scenery I have seen since coming to France.

I am quite tired tonight from my five-hours flying, most of it being between ten and fifteen

thousand feet. After 3,500 metres one has to breathe through the mouth—or at least it is easier. It is quite cold, but we bundle up well; most of the boys have trouble with their ears after a quick descent from high altitudes, but I have found that holding the nose tight and blowing and also frequent swallowing with the mouth open is a tremendous help. Chasse patrols are kept at the front now at an altitude of 6,000 metres (20,000 feet); remaining at this height for two hours at a stretch is very fatiguing and in the end affects the heart, lungs and nerves. Several battles between isolated chasse machines have taken place at 7,000 metres, but that is unusual. The altitude record is 8,200 metres, but the pilot had to take oxygen in tanks with him to be able to breathe, and then nearly perished with the cold. I don't believe they'll get much above 30,000 feet for some years. I have never been above 15,000 feet in an aeroplane yet, but probably will before I leave here.

I have become quite discouraged about this war. The Germans will without doubt take Petrograd and Venice. Russia is through for good and may even sign a separate peace. Italy's army is permanently crippled, probably. I honestly don't see how the Germans can ever be

defeated. They are still very strong militarily, and have a long, long way to retreat. The army will never revolt, but France's and England's? The French are scrapping terribly in politics, several serious scandals have become public, and America—good Lord! the amount of rot we read in the papers! Her “latest” airplane specifications were six months out of date seven months ago. From what French aeronautic experts think, the Liberty motor is useless for a front machine; she took over as chief aviation school in France, Issoudun, previously condemned by the French for their own purposes, and they say the most stupid things over here. “‘How to win the war’—by an American” is a sort of by-word here. The contingent in the trenches is paying for its swaggering conceit. We all have to learn, I suppose. I’ve learned an awful lot by just such things in this war.

The caramels reached Knoedler Company all right. Thanks awfully for sending them. Would you and Mother mind giving me a good pair of field-glasses for Christmas. I can’t afford to buy a really good pair. They are a marvelous help in aviation. It is very hard to distinguish a German from an Allied plane at a distance. Several aviators have told me how much of their success

is due to glasses, as they can see a Boche in time to manoeuvre before Fritz sees him.

It is going to be a terrible winter. There is almost no coal, little sugar, few dairy products. The world here in Europe seems to me to be groaning in agony. Will this war never end? I came here looking for trouble. I found it, but have had my belly full, and will never search it again. How I long for peace and quiet! Must stop.

*Very lovingly,*

HOUSTON

POSTAL CARD

*Pau, November 22nd, 1917*

*Dear Mother:—*

Have finished here. Pau is delightful. I love it and am awfully sorry to have to go north again. The mountains are beautiful. This view is taken from the boulevard. I have flown very low over the river at just this spot. Was lower than the boulevard, also skimmed the mountain range shown in this picture.

Pau, like everywhere else, is very deserted since the war. Am leaving for Paris and Plessy-Belleville this evening.

*Much love,*

HOUSTON

CABLE

*Paris, November 24th, 1917*

Plessy waiting escadrille.

[The only letters of Houston which were not passed by the censor were those written at this time, and as they were returned to him we have no account of his entering the escadrille nor of his Christmas in France.]

*(New Year's Eve tomorrow)*

*December 30th, 1917*

*Dear Mother:—*

My last two letters to you and Father were returned by the officious new censor. This letter will therefore be stripped of any interesting news.

At last I am at the front, and I find it much more interesting, and am much better treated than when in the schools. Everyone does all he can for you, so life is an agreeable relief from the schools, mixed with chronic boredom when not flying.

Winter is unfavorable flying weather. There are generally clouds, snow, fog or mist, which make us keep to mother earth. It has been so awfully long now since you will have heard from me that I hardly know where to begin. The best thing for me to do is to write a

letter nearly each day for some time to make up for lost time, and take up different subjects each time.

First of all, thanks an awful lot for the sweater. I like it just as much as the *passe montagne* (helmet) and treasure the two above all my other clothes. I have worn the sweater absolutely every day since coming to the front, and probably shall wear it every day in the future until warm spring weather. It is very warm with that lining (a splendid and original idea), very handsome, fits well, and is altogether most agreeable. I sleep in it every night, and wear it flying. It has already traversed a large sector of the lines, and has penetrated on several occasions some kilometres into Bocheländ. You didn't know when you made it it was going into German territory. But the Huns didn't get it—and they won't.

We live very well here. All the pilots of the *escadrille* live in a large barracks, which is divided into *chambres*, two in each room. We have little gasoline stoves, so are always nice and warm. I had a very comfortable spring bed made, and the food is excellent. Consequently, I am very well off, and quite content. We have electric lights everywhere in the building, coal for the stove in the living room, a bar, reading room and books,

a phonograph, lots of dogs, and all other accessories, so are better off than the Parisians.

That's all for tonight. Will write every other day or so for some time.

*Lovingly,*

HOUSTON



*Escadrille No. 94, S. P. 12, France,*

*January 5th, 1918*

*Dear Mother:—*

I shall have to hurry up and do something about writing home, for I am way behind.

Life is thrilling enough now-a-days to satisfy even me. The weather has been more favorable for flying during these last ten days than is usual for this time of year. Though there is generally a mist or low clouds to prevent work in the morning, we generally get in from 1 to 2½ hours of flying in the afternoon. I have had fifteen hours over the lines since December 22, which is excellent for the time of year. You probably would like to have just a few words about our work.

Before getting on the "disparible" list, I had to undergo five hours of "patrouilles d'entrainement" just behind the lines. Although I saw several Boches, we had strict orders to avoid unnecessary conflicts on account of my lack of experience. That was rather uninteresting work, but I became very familiar with the secteur, and, of course, with my machine. For over a week now, though, I have been disparible—subject to be called out at any time for special patrol work or for protection.

Today the French made a small attack, and our escadrille sent out two patrols, one to fly low and prevent any Boche from crossing for observation work, the other to do the ceiling work to protect the lower patrol and also prevent Fritz from crossing by the ceiling. I was on the high patrol. There were three of us, and three on the low. For one hour and a half we turned, spiralled, jumped, dove, and hovered over the sector of attack at between 3,500 and 5,400 metres. Not a Boche was in sight—wisely for him, for we were very strong. Besides our Nieuports, there were many Spads on the scene. Fritz never had a chance.

It was so dull, our chef de patrouille started a raid into Bocheland. We penetrated ten kilometres, and then, far below us, at 2,800 metres altitude perhaps, we saw two Rumplers (German bi-planes). I could almost hear our leader whoop as he swooped down on them. I was right beside him, and never was so thrilled with the hunt before in my life. Unfortunately the distance was too great. Fritz saw us, and both dove like frightened birds. There was nothing to do. They had a 1,000-metre lead in the dive, and the archies were barking hot. We straightened out in ligne de vol, made a vertical virage (turn), and

started climbing with all the power of our one hundred and twenty-horse-power rotaries back to the lines. The archies were shooting well; we had to alter our course often. I had one scare. A C. A. (contre-avion) broke right under my tail, threw it up, and I found myself in a vertical nose dive with full motor. I was pretty scared, for I thought my tail had been shot away, and I began to wonder what I and my machine would look like buried in the ground after a 4,000-metre plunge. Luckily I was untouched, it had just been the concussion. They're nasty sometimes, those archies. I have been lifted twenty-five or thirty feet in the air by them breaking directly under the fuselage.

Yesterday I was nearly in serious trouble. Two of us were doing the chasse just over in Boche-land. One Albatross (German avion de chasse) was hovering below us, but we were in the sun and he didn't see us. We got into position, then dove. I closed in on him from above, drew a perfect bead, and pulled the trigger. The mitrailleuse fired twice, then jammed solid. Mad? I swore in five languages, for I was in perfect position. *C'etait fini*. Fritz was warned, I was unarmed, and before my companion could reach him he was vrilleing earthward at a rate which

prevented pursuit. Maybe I didn't give the mitrailleur at the escadrille —. Next time I hope my gun will shoot.

I claim no one knows what cold is till they have climbed to above 5,000 metres in a swift chasseur on a biting, way-below freezing January day. Whew! On my feet I wear heavy woollen socks, a pair of slippers, and then the heavy woollen chaussais fourrées the army gives us. *Comme ça j'ai assez chaud aux pieds.* On my legs I have two pairs woollen underdrawers, heavy breeches, woollen leggings. On my body I wear two undershirts, a jersey, a shirt, a sweater-vest, Mother's sweater, a leather coat, and over everything the excellent heavy fur combinaison the army gives. My gloves I stuff with paper, and my fur helmet keeps my head warm. I don't know exactly what the temperature is up there, but one of the boys has a centigrade thermometer which averages between fifteen and twenty below zero. I don't know just what that is in Fahrenheit, but I know it's cold, especially considering the speed with which we rush through space.

We rule the air in this sector. In some sectors Fritz is king, in some it's a toss-up, but here we are the undisputed bosses of the third element. For several weeks now very few Boches have

crossed to our side and gotten back to tell about it. For ten days now I have not seen a Boche the French side of the lines. We hunt over in Bochelands now at will. I'm inclined to think it won't last long. Fritz is thoroughly scared here, and afraid to take the air. That's bad medicine for him. He's going to bring up a few crack escadrilles surely, and then the fur's going to fly. It's a good scrappy crowd in this group, and they're feeling their oats. This free hunting won't go on indefinitely, I'm sure.

Well, I don't dare use any more paper. Thanks a thousand times for the delicious caramels. Christmas box has not yet arrived.

*Lots of Love,*

HOUSTON

*Escadrille No. 94, S. P. 12,  
January 5th, 1918*

*Dear Father:—*

I wrote Mother quite a long letter tonight, but after sealing it I thought I might send you this service du jour, which is posted every night in our barracks. This one is today's list. I was first, but tomorrow I shall be among the last three or four, the next day higher up, according to the missions executed, and so forth.

*Service du 5 Janvier 1918*

Caporal	Woodward
Lieut.	Parizet
Brigad.	B——
M. des L.	O——
Lieut.	de L——
M. d. L.	Marinovitch
Caporal	Crehore
Caporal	M——
Caporal	C——
Lieut.	L——
M. d. L.	B——
Adjt.	de C——

*Trois pilotes de la N. 156 et trois de la N. 94 seront autorisés à prendre le tracteur qui partira demainni à 7 h. 30 pour les obsèques du Caporal Nicholas.*

*Les soldats Rispal et Prodault serent auterisés à s'y rendre par le même tracteur.*

*Mission 117—Fermer d'Alger*

Caporal Woodward

Lieut. Parizet

M. d. L. Marinovitch

Caporal Crehore

P—— is a very nice, lively, sporty, quick chap. He talks fair English, and is very agreeable and handsome. B—— I don't care for. He's some peasant or farmer, and has never overcome his original disadvantages. Hair awfully long, filthy finger nails, drinks gallons of pinard, and yells when he talks.

O—— is a corker. Nice, quiet, refined little Frenchman, very modest, excellent flyer, lots of nerve. Can trust him in a scrap. Very good-natured and likable.

De L—— is of one of the F. F. V., and a prince of a fellow. Used to play golf with him at Pau. Taller than I am, very dark with beautiful blue eyes. Has had three brothers killed, and is the sole survivor of his generation.

Marinovitch. The ace of the escadrille. My best friend, and one of the whitest, cleanest little fellows I have ever met. Father a Serbian, Mother a Pole, was born in France, educated in Ireland, has been a French citizen for several years, and



talks English, French, German perfectly, and Lord knows how many other languages he has a smattering of. Has the cutest pet of the crowd, a cross between a collie and a monkey it looks like. Superb flyer. Has brought down three Boches since early December, and was the first Frenchman to get a Boche in 1918, bringing one down inside their lines New Year's afternoon early.

C——, the other American. From New Jersey somewhere. Very nice, quiet fellow, but pretty deaf, and getting deafer every day. His brother a crack runner at Yale while I was there. Am worried about him because of ears. Doesn't know there are archies till he sees them or feels their concussion. Very dependable. More steady than brilliant.

M——. Pleasant, quiet, retiring, former Zouave. Speaks English some. Don't know him well.

C——. Wide-awake, energetic, bright little English-speaking Frenchman.

L——. Quite nice. A bit proud, handsome, nice enough, but not very sure of himself as a flyer, as yet.

B——. Amusing Algerian. Lazy, pleasure-loving. Avoids Boches if he can. Also trouble.



This classification will probably amuse you, but you always seem desirous to know whom I am with. It's a pleasant, likable, good-natured, happy-go-lucky crowd, who have earned an excellent name for No. 94.

The escadrille is a bit short now, as a couple of fellows were killed since Christmas. Rayer was made sick by the cold and fell in a vrille on his way home a day or two after Christmas. Nicholas, a bully little athlete, and very clever boxer, was shot in the arm and chest by an Albatross two or three days ago, and died that night in a field hospital after landing within our lines.

The caramels were most acceptable. Be careful how you send packages. Half, if not more, are lost. The safest way is to give them to some one coming over. The mails here are wretched.

Am going to bed. Sleep every night in my two undershirts, two underdrawers, jersey, shirt, sweater-vest, mother's sweater, breeches, socks, and woollen leggings. Over me I have three blankets, peau de pique coat, overcoat, and combination fourrée. You can't imagine how penetratingly cold it is. And yet in spite of it all, I love the life, and wouldn't care to be anywhere else. I could get a permission home to swank around in my red breeches and black coat with

silver trimmings with high boots and carrying a swagger stick, and get the orchestra to play the Marseillaise every time I walked into a hotel, but what's the use? The other boys have done that, some of them, and have enjoyed it tremendously, but I'm too much in love with the life and a few people here. Paris is as good—and better than New York, Philadelphia, or Baltimore for me—and though I would like awfully to see you all again, well, that will have to wait a bit. I may go home between transfers to United States Army. *On verra.*

The guns are rumbling chronically. There must be a *coup de main* taking place. Luckily we don't fly at night. I have a mission in the morning if it's good weather, so am going to bed.

*Lovingly,*

HOUSTON

P. S.: Speaking of clothes, I put mine on the day I left Paris, and intend to keep them on until I go back. It won't be the first time I've been over a month without a bath.

P. P. S.: There's another I forgot, M——. Machine smashed now. Good flyer. Descended couple of Boches. Wounded in 1915, and was in hospital year and a half. Very swank, nice chap.

*January 9th, 1918*

*Dear Father:—*

Although it is late, and the lights are going out soon, I will have time to write you about the big day I had last Sunday. Sent you a cable saying I had brought down an Albatross, but all communications are so rotten I don't know whether you ever got it, so this may be the first you know of it.

On January 6th three of us were to make a  $1\frac{1}{2}$  hour morning patrol. One of the Frenchmen had magneto trouble, and couldn't go up, so Lieutenant Parizet and I started off together to patrol the sector. There was nothing doing. Not a Boche in sight. So far as that goes, I haven't seen a Boche our side for two weeks. We crossed the lines a bit at 4,000 metres, and soon saw three Albatross monoplanes sailing along at about 3,300 metres. I didn't wait for Parizet, who was leading, to start for them, but piqued on one of them immediately. Parizet made a slight detour, then dove on one from the side, leaving the third, the leader, free. My Boche made a quick turn, so I redressed and began manoeuvring to get behind and above him.

Finally I got him where I wanted him, and piqued steep, shooting all the time. Parizet was then just ahead of and above me, and I saw him shooting at a Boche who was manoeuvring to attack me. He over-piqued eventually, and the Boche fired about twenty shots at me from the side and a trifle below. He got so close I could see his face, and for a second I hesitated whether to turn on him or continue with the original one. He fell over on his side, though, so I let him go; I put my machine in a vertical nose dive, gaining tremendous speed, then redressed, and quickly overtook my fleeing Boche. Got within one hundred metres of him, and sent in a steady stream of bullets. When I was so close to him that I started to redress to avoid colliding with him, I saw him slowly slip over on the wing, then go into a slow vrille, and after a few manoeuvres to keep him always under fire, I saw he had been hit, and made a vertical spiral to watch him vrille down to the ground. I was now at about 2,500 metres, and the other two Boches about a thousand metres below. Parizet had remained at 3,000 metres, but I decided to take my chances with the other two, so threw my machine over on her side, and dropped seven hundred metres like a plummet in a couple of seconds. Both Alba-



HOUSTON IN THE MACHINE IN WHICH  
HE LEARNED TO FLY



tross immediately continued their piquing. I followed one as low as 1,000 metres, but dared go no further after him. Then the fireworks began. One thousand metres is extremely low for five kilometres inside the German lines, and the air became black around me with their anti-aircrafts. I couldn't go in a straight line, and, as there was a heavy head wind, it took me ages to get inside our lines again.

That is all the description I can give of my first fight. It was very thrilling, and the most wonderful sport I have ever participated in. I was in danger only the time when the Boche fired at me, and then somehow it seemed so funny I burst out laughing. I had always rather dreaded my first combat, but there's nothing nervous or rattling about it. It was more like practice at target shooting than anything else, as the aim has to be very carefully timed and corrected. There is a tremendously exhilarating thrill about it, however, and the passion of the hunt.

Had another scrap in the afternoon, and if I had not been so pressed I could have brought him down easily. Was on a rather large patrol in a concentrated area, as we had reason to believe the Boches were going to make a *coup de main*



there. Everything was perfectly quiet, however. There wasn't a Boche to be seen in the sky. I got kind of bored at this stupid empty flying, so left the patrol, climbed to 4,400 metres (I was a little sick with the cold) and crossed over to ten kilos in Bocheland. Still nothing to be seen, so I came down to 3,600. At last I saw an avion coming in my direction, so I turned to meet him, both of us climbing at the same time. He looked like a Nieuport, and I was sure he was. When he was eight hundred metres from me he turned, throwing up the bottom of his wings to show, as I thought, that he was French. I made a quarter turn, then decided to follow him, thinking all the time it was a Nieuport. Overtook him, and then pulled what is probably one of the dumbest, biggest bonehead stunts in the war's aviation history. By this time I had taken it for granted he was a Nieuport, so had gotten in position to patrol with him. He apparently was just as positive that I was an Albatross, and I don't wonder, for a Nieuport is practically never seen now, especially alone, so far inside the German lines as I was. Well, for three minutes the two of us made a patrol together, I swerving from side to side and looking keenly above, below, behind, and on both sides for any enemy ma-



chines, and all the time I was one hundred and fifty metres behind and fifty metres above one, thinking he was French! Then suddenly I saw the Maltese crosses on his wings, and the sight of them hit me like a blow. I couldn't believe my eyes. For a second I thought I must be in a dream. Then I made in my haste a big mistake. Had I taken my time, I could have closed in, dived beneath his tail, and shot him down from directly underneath. I was a little upset by the startling discovery, however, and acted a little hastily. I immediately piqued on him, firing my gun. At the first shot he glanced back, and immediately dove, then put his machine in a vrille. At first I thought I had hit him, and was feeling pretty jubilant at the thought of bagging two in one day—a rare feat. The beggar had just been too yellow to fight, though, and dove without making any effort to put up a scrap. I saw him redress at about 1,000 metres, and I was pretty sore, for if he had stayed I might have gotten him, as the Albatrosses are too clumsy to manoeuvre well, and I can spin my little Nieuport around into any position like a toy. Fritz is frightened to death in this region, though, and the two of us in the morning were too much for their three.

Had quite a time getting home. The head wind was still blowing hard, I had a long way to buck it, was all alone in enemy territory, and the archies were shooting all around me. I didn't care to zig-zag back, but preferred to take a chance on a more or less straight dash, which would bring me home quicker, but at the same time make me an easier target for the "anties." Got through their fire all right, though it was pretty uncomfortable. Then, just before I had regained the lines, they threw up a perfect barrage directly in front of me. I veered off at right angles just in time. You see, they can get the range almost perfectly, but have difficulty in laying angle of direction. I was feeling perfectly safe now, so near our lines, so decided to have a little fun with them. I made no effort to go through their continued barrage, but commenced a vertical spiral just in back of it. When the first couple of shots broke near me, I made a dart parallel to the lines, then before they could alter their aim, turned sharp, and gave full speed in the opposite direction. Before they could alter, I changed again, and did this six or seven times, laughing at how mixed up they must be. Finally they became so bewildered that they ceased firing altogether, not knowing where to aim. Then

was my chance, and giving full juice I dashed back into French territory before they could put up another shell at me. If they had a good telescope, I hope they could see me turn in my seat and thumb my nose at them.

That was all for the day. I was awfully sorry I hadn't got my Boche, but I didn't deserve to on account of being so dumb as to mistake him for a Nieuport. The two machines look very much alike, but I should have been more careful. In the evening the commandant of the groupe called me to his office, and after congratulating me for the Boche, said that we had broken an order in crossing the lines with less than three Nieuports, and strictly forbade me to cross alone ever again.

It was foolish of me to do it, but it was the recklessness of ignorance and a little unlooked-for success. I shall be much more prudent in the future.

Unfortunately there was a mist and poor visibility in the morning, so no saucisses were up, and the C. A.'s could not follow the Boche to the ground, so, although my Boche is recognized, it is not "hanologated" and I can't get a citation out of it. These are always rather disappointing. As a rule, on the average, only two thirds or three fourths of the machines descended are

hanologated. Thus Guynemer had some twenty-five victims unhanologated. Lufberry has about seven. The eccentric Navarre—greatest flyer who ever lived, unanimously and undisputably so—has some twenty-five unhanologated.

Have to stop.

Attorney's certificate just arrived a couple of days ago. Would have received it much sooner if addressed to Morgan-Harjes instead of Pau.

Did box of Christmas presents arrive all right? Am going to send you my photograph later as a present. Quita's wasn't ready when I left Paris, so will send yours, Q's and Chas. later. Had Mother's kimona made from stuff I thought she would like. S's and G's wallets may seem effeminate to them, but are the smartest things men carry here. Mr. Edmonds still has Christmas box.

*Love,*

HOUSTON

*Saturday, January 19th, 1918*

*Dear Father:—*

I am terribly tired tonight, but will try to get off a short letter before going to bed.

Today was the first good day since the 13th. Everyone was terribly fed up with the loafing, so very restless. The result is that it has been a very memorable day. Everyone in this group flew, and judging from all the Boche machines I saw, I guess all the Huns were up, too. This morning Winter and Putnam flew with a French Lieutenant. They penetrated the German lines six or seven kilometres, and then things happened so fast that no one can give a clear account. Winter was piqued on by two Boches, probably Fokkers, and threw himself around like a cork on rough water. How he got away he doesn't know, but he did every acrobatic known, and somehow escaped untouched. Belloc attacked a Fokker, then found himself attacked by two, and by jumping around got away. Putnam got separated from the others, attacked two Fokkers and brought one of them down, the Boche plunging into a forest. Unfortunately it was not hanologated.

(JANUARY 21st—*couldn't finish other evening*)  
Put's Boche was hanologated. Some infantry  
had observed the chute.

This afternoon while piquing on a German  
observation machine I became separated from  
my companion. The Hun turned when I was  
still far from him, and beat it. I chased him.  
Meanwhile another Nieuport had dropped in on  
the scene, and suddenly he began shooting tow-  
ards me. I didn't know what in blazes was the  
matter till I discovered he was trying to attract  
my attention to three Boches chasseurs who were  
approaching. We beat it then. Maybe they  
can't travel, those German machines. They  
nearly caught us, and they were four, with ten  
mitrailleuses, to us two with two mitrailleuses.  
Then I tried to find my original companion. I  
found him, but immediately lost him again when  
I piqued on another Boche. I thought Bessieres  
had seen him, but learned later he had not. This  
second Boche also turned and ran, but was im-  
mediately joined by two others, so I once again  
beat a hasty retreat. Several times then I started  
to return home, but each time saw something  
which turned me back, once a combat, once  
two Boches, once anti-aircraft éclats. I was in  
the air two hours and forty minutes, and the



reservoir holds only two hours fifteen minutes' supply, so I reached home with not enough essence to wet the tank. Everyone was terribly worried, for news had been phoned in that a Nieuport had been seen falling loin chez eux at 3:15, and as I had left Bessieres at three, they all were sure it was I. The captain was absolutely pale, and gave me hell for ten minutes straight.

Poor old Variot. He used to be in 94, but was transferred to 156 when that escadrille was formed. He still lived with us however, and everyone liked him. Very good flier, old pilot, and had two Boches to his credit. Loin chez eux he became separated from his two companions, and no one has ever seen him since. It was phoned in that a Nieuport was seen fighting six Albatross for five minutes, and then descended in flames. It was impossible to do otherwise. He should not have tried to fight. If ever I get in a tight place chez eux I am going to pretend I am hit, and drop like lead. When very near the ground I shall redress, and just skin the soil full speed, leaping trees and fences, and thus with comparative safety regain chez nous. I have practiced it, and can get away with it I am sure. This will be a great safeguard, and a pretty sure preventive from joining the daisy pushers. That same day

Marinovitch and Crehore together brought down one of the Tangos—Germany's famous circus escadrille. This makes Marinovitch ace, and his third machine within a month.

*Lovingly,*

HOUSTON



*Friday, January 25th, 1918*

*Dear Mother:—*

After that terrific cold spell, we now have weather almost resembling early summer. With the warmth has come fair weather these last two days, and I do hope it will continue a while to give us a chance to break the monotony by flying.

Three or four days ago we pulled off a nice little stunt. Four of us were sent out to mitrailleuse the Boche trenches in a rather troublesome sector. These mitrailleage expeditions do little, if any, actual material harm to the enemy, but they are supposed to be a fine stimulant to the fantassins. It is a very dangerous game. The anti-aircrafts shoot at you, the soldiers shoot at you, the trench mitrailleuses, and now and then the trench artillery shoot at you. It isn't a very friendly reception they hand out. We cruised over to the lines at 3,000 feet, piquing just before we reached them to about 2,400 feet. Then we got in Indian file. The leader crossed No-Man's Land, and when directly over the Hun first line, turned, dove, and shot a steady stream till at about 300 feet when he turned sharp, made a quick dash across No-Man's Land to our side,

and started climbing to repeat the stunt. Each of us followed exactly the same process, and by the time the last had finished, the first had regained his position, and dove again, followed in regular order by the rest of us. In all, we turned about 1,500 shots on the trenches. It was pretty good sport, though a bit too risky to be very comfortable, and I don't believe it hurt the enemy in the least. It seemed to tickle the poilus, though, for I could see them waving their arms and their casques to us from the second and third lines. We had to make a patrol afterwards, so had to save about a hundred balls apiece in case of a possible party with Fritz. After two dives apiece, therefore, we climbed to about 2,400 feet (very low, as flying goes) and there gave a nice little stunt exhibition in formation. The trenchers must have opened their eyes some. Barrel turns, renversements, vrilles, vertical virages, loops, we ran the whole gamut several times each. It was great. The archies had gotten our range well by now, and were breaking and crashing around us pretty regularly. It got a bit hot, so the leader hauled clear, and we climbed to make our patrol. The clouds were low, 9,000 feet, and we were in them practically all the time. I climbed on up through several times to see if Fritz was lurking in the

ceiling, but seeing no one anywhere, stayed on the bottom edge or in the vapor the rest of the time. R. A. S. (*rien à signaler*). I'm not crazy about clouds *chez nous*, but they're good friends *chez eux*. They're a bit wet and cold; it's impossible to see anything; the wind-shield, mirror, and goggles get covered with a thick mist which generally freezes in this weather, and the cold is penetrating. Incidentally, they are in general very rough, and we are tossed all about like a mere feather in a jagged squall.

Had quite a panne yesterday. Started out on a patrol with the captain and another chap. My engine began to growl a bit, and all of a sudden there was a crash, the grinding of metal being torn, grating, and rattling, and I didn't know whether my plane was falling apart, or what had happened. A valve rod and cylinder head had broken, had cut the metal engine covering, and stopped and snapped off short when it hit the mitrailleuse. For a few seconds I thought my last hour had come. I instantaneously cut the contact (shut the switch) then to stop the propeller and engine turning, pulled the machine up as far as possible without tumbling, and by thus decreasing the air resistance, managed to kill the engine. Then I turned and started piquing for

home. I was at 6,500 feet, and didn't know what damage had been done, so couldn't be sure whether my machine would hold together or not, which made the volplaning more or less unenjoyable. I was too far away from home to make the piste, so piqued for the aviation field where I knew the Lafayette Escadrille was stationed. It's a bit of a knack landing exactly where you want after planing from far with no motor, but luck was with me and I brought up right in front of the hangars. Telephoned to No. 94, who sent an automobile to fetch me. Today the mechanics brought a new motor to the field, put it on, and this evening I was told my machine was ready. I motor over and fly it back tomorrow morning.

Putnam brought out my field-glasses, your Christmas cards, and the religious books from Paris. The glasses are magnificent. Haven't had a chance to use them in my plane yet, but amused myself all day with them on the piste. They are the admiration of all. It's extraordinary how they help see planes otherwise small and invisible. Thank G, S, C, and Q, for their cards, and also S for his letter dated November 25th.

Stuffy Spencer, Yale 1917 or '18, was killed in

a plane accident near Belfort the other day. He was a prince of a fellow, and a very good friend of mine.

*Very lovingly,*

HOUSTON

*February 6th, 1918*

*Dear Father:—*

I've had my first fling on the front at the enemy, and now I'm going back to the rear for a breather. The first of February our escadrille retired en repos, and also to be transformed into a new groupe. It will be a month anyway, maybe two, before we again resume work on the lines, but when we do, it will be at the hottest part of the whole front, where the expected big German offensive will be staged, or where the French may push a drive. In the meanwhile I'm going on leave to seek sunny climes in the south of France, along the Riviera. I have been able to see every breath taken since coming to the front, only very seldom being in a place heated enough so you couldn't see it. I'm pretty fed up on mud, cold, mud, mud, wet, cold, mud, and if there's any heat and sun left in Europe, I'm going to find it if I have to sneak into Italy to do so. Also it will be great to get up in the morning, knowing for certain you're going to be in that bed again that night. You bet I'm going to be glad when I leave the sound of guns, the black cloud of apprehension, the black anti-aircrafts, the singing

bullets, and the cold, and the wet, and the mud behind me. I'm feeling pretty happy now, but why shouldn't I? Tomorrow morning I fly into Paris with my machine, leave it at the G. D. E., then select a brand new Spad two hundred and thirty horse-power, the fastest, strongest, and best machine the French have, and the greatest machine on any front. With it I can climb to 15,000 feet in about fifteen minutes, can race along at one hundred and thirty miles an hour at that height, can pique like a plummet, and with my two Vickers mitrailleuses shooting between the blades, can spit death like sparks from a fire. I shall now be able to overtake Fritz, to out-climb him, out-pique him, out-manoeuver him, and if I don't drive the fear of God into more than one yellow Hun, I deserve to never fly again.

Shall be in Paris some time, as it is only a few miles from the parc, and it will take some days to select my machine and get it running well. After that, ten days permission—not counting travelling time—and me for Nice, the Italian border, Monte Carlo, Cannes, and a few hours in Marseilles just to look the town over. Then Panani (argot for Paris) again, then back to the front.

My first spell at the front has been great, and



I have really enjoyed it tremendously. I love flying, and enjoy it for its own sake, but when you throw in also the thrill of the hunt, the excitement of the chase, and the game of death, flying becomes the greatest sport of them all. I think I am rather justifiably proud of my first two months (seven weeks to be exact) of work. A newcomer, I was given an antedated machine (the Nieuport) and the old type at that. It was excellent, but not so good as the Spads. I had on it, however, forty hours on the lines, four combats, several protections, none of the reconnaissance machines under my protection ever being attacked even, though made deep into the enemy's territory sometimes, and shot down at least one Boche plane, and maybe two. I think I told you about that. How I piqued three times on the last of three Boche reglage bi-planes, and fired on him each of the first two dives, but didn't even see him the last time. I have no idea what happened to him. I don't think I got him, as I never dared approach nearer than five hundred yards, their three bi-planes being way beyond a match for my single monoplane. It is curious where in thunder he disappeared to so quickly, however.

Received a batch of letters from you and



Mother yesterday, many of them written from Augusta. Was very sorry to hear Quita had come down with the chicken-pox.

My Christmas package I hope reached you all right. You certainly should have gotten it long before now, but as I have heard nothing about it, am going to look it up by American Express when I go to Paris. It was sent by them before I came to the front. Tell Mother I've read the book of poems, but I don't think they're very strong or forceful.

I do hope you keep your promise about the candy. I suppose you know of the chronic sugar crisis here. Some boys even receive boxes of sugar from their homes. Candy will certainly go fine. Your caramels were most acceptable. The glasses are superb. I am tickled to pieces with them, and are just exactly what I wanted.

Tell Henry that poor old Phil Benney, who was with him in A. A. Sec. 12, was attacked by several Albatross, shot twice in the thigh, landed just back of the French trenches, was saved and rushed to a hospital by poilus, and had blood transfused from a plucky French sergeant. It was too late. He died in the hospital. It was very near Verdun.

*Lovingly,*

HOUSTON

*March 12th, 1918*

*Dear Mother:—*

I find to my horror that it is over a month since I last wrote home. It is generally impossible to write during a permission as absolutely every minute of the time is more than taken. I shall now try to make up for lost time, however.

I had a splendid leave. Left the front February 7th to get a new machine. Was at Plessis-Belleville several days training on a Spad, then passed about a week at Bourget getting and trying out my new machine. Bourget is just outside the city walls, so went out from Paris every noon in a taxi, flew a few turns, then went right back to Paris. It was a fine week. Flew over Paris several times, and was surprised to see what an enormous city it is. Had lots of fun picking out the various places, streets, and buildings, with which I am now very familiar. On the 17th of February I flew my machine out to the front, and it was a great little joy ride. Followed the Marne most of the time, and it is the crookedest river I've ever seen. I know the geography of the war pretty well, including that of the battle of the Marne, and it was very interesting to see the

whole famous battle-ground spread out beneath. From my altitude you could see nearly from Meaux to Soissons, and it was very interesting to pick out the ground, the roads even, by which the Boches made their great day-and-a-half retreat from Meaux to the Soissons, Reims, Argonne line. It was like an enormous map spread out beneath your gaze.

The next day, the 18th, I set out for my permission de detente. I was going to Nice, Cannes, Monte Carlo, Marseilles, as I have always longed to visit the Riviera. It would have been bully, and everything was arranged beautifully. Lady Paget had asked me to visit her at Cannes, and I was going to spend four days with her. Then I was going to spend three days with some French friends at Nice and on the way back to Paris was going to spend the night with an awfully nice English family at their place at Avignon. It would have been a delightful leave, but then, the confounded portrait came along and messed up everything. I haven't particularly kind thoughts about that portrait. The rest of the letter I suppose I shall have to spend telling about it.

When I got Father's cable I decided to have my portrait painted, you all seemed so desirous to have it, and then I thought it would be a good

souvenir in case anything did happen to me. About the best portrait painter in Europe now, and in France for certain, is the Princess Mary Eristoff, a Russian. She is really a genius. I never saw anybody do work which can begin to compare with her extraordinary portraits. They're not pictures, they're living images. Her price is generally 10,000 francs (\$2,000) but not knowing anything about the price of portraits, I didn't know how much you would be willing to pay. Since then I have learned that her prices are very cheap for the work done. Luckily I have known her some time, and she happened to like me a little, so she said she would paint my portrait, and I could give her any price I wanted. I knew she was hard up, for although she makes a lot of money, she is always giving everything away to the needy, so she never has anything herself. She is an extraordinary character, and that is one of her characteristics; 5,000 francs didn't seem too much for you to pay, so I suggested it, and she agreed. Well, I still hoped to go to Nice, and as she is famous also for the rapidity with which she works, I thought I could get down all right. Then there was a delay in getting canvas. You have no idea how hard it is to get things now which aren't connected with





HOUSTON'S PORTRAIT  
Painted by Princess Mary Eristoff

the war. Well, we finally got started. Then the princess got so interested in me and the picture that she went into the thing very detailedly, changed the lights several times, put a setting sun shining on my face and clothes, then rubbed it out, then found another light. Then she discovered I had an Egyptian face, ancient Egypt, that is, not modern. So the fun she had painting a classic mouth, long, straight nose, high cheek bones, and long sphynx eyes! I will admit it was a stunner, and I began to think I was good looking. Then we all decided that the first expression was more characteristic, so *encore une fois* the whole thing had to be changed. Well, eventually, after over-staying my leave two days, it was practically finished. It's a corker. You will be tremendously pleased, I am sure. It's too good to take chances with sending it across, so she is going to keep it for a few months, at least. Any way, the uniform isn't quite finished, so she will have to finish the next time I go in. I'm in a half-sitting posture, supposed to be resting on a ledge high up on a cliff. The background is the sun setting below me, with the sky its typical gold, red, and purple sunset glows. It's magnificently worked out, and makes a stunning background. The cliff is brownish rock. I



have my blue uniform, with blue shirt and tie, and blue roll puttees over black shoes. My left hand is resting on the left leg half way between knee and thigh, and the right forearm on the right leg. The expression is splendid and *bien moi*. The eyes and mouth have a half smile, and also an enigmatic and teasing expression. Everyone thinks it's fine. I shall have a photograph of it sent you.

I really had a very pleasant time in the studio, and if it were not for being always a little peeved about giving up the Riviera visit, I should have considered it a perfect permission. There were always a lot of people there. I met many of the Paris American colony, for the princess, like so many cultured Russians, speaks about four or five languages perfectly. She is extremely popular, so the studio always had visitors. There was one young Englishwoman whom I became quite devoted to who came in and spent the whole of every day with us. I used to take her and the princess out for lunch nearly every day, then people would drop in for tea in the studio, and I had dinner and theatre every evening with different friends. The evening of my birthday the English girl gave a dinner for me and I gave a box party afterwards, so it was very pleasantly cele-



brated. I give all these details because you and Father have spoken lately wondering how I pass my "perms." I have a great many friends in Paris, and they are terribly nice to me whenever I go in. I met many of the artist set this last time, then I see the diplomatic set from time to time, have gotten to know many of the best Paris families, and then of course one always meets those *du monde*. The only people in Paris I don't know are the Americans. Then there are always lots of my aviation, army, ambulance, business, and casual friends in Paris, so I have my time really too occupied. Life becomes a bit of a strain when one crowds so much into a short fortnight.

The letter will be too fat, I fear, if I write another sheet. Have just lost two of my best friends. Wallace Winter of Chicago was killed when the wings fell off his machine. Thomas Hitchcock of New York crossed the lines and didn't come back. Will write about both boys in another letter.

Thank Quita for her letter.

*Love,*

HOUSTON

March 19th, 1918

*Dearest Little Quita:—*

Thanks so much for your sweet little business letter. There were quite a number of words I was able to read first time with very little trouble.

I don't think you would like to be over here very much. It has been cold and wet and nasty ever since the end of November, but at last the days are almost nice again, and we have made a very pretty garden outside our barracks, where we bask in the good old sun when he is working and we aren't. During the winter I had grown afraid that "Old Sol" had wandered off into other worlds somewhere, had become lost, and could not find his way back.

I shall try to bring down lots of Huns, and if any fall in our lines I'll send you any iron crosses, rings, or things which I can take off them.

I hope you are being a good little girl, going to school, studying hard, and taking a bath from time to time.

Everyone thinks that the picture of you which Mother sent me for Christmas is awfully cute. You look as if you were as full of life, fun, and





HOUSTON AND QUITA  
September, 1911

mischievous as ever, and I hope you are taking very good care of yourself.

After seeing these subdued, prim, neat little wax-doll-like children in France, I imagine it will be an awful shock to run across a real kid like you again.

Well, Quita, I'm a busy man these days, so have to stop writing and see that my machine is being worked on.

*Au revoir ma petite. Tu es mignone, mais sois sage, et pense de temps en temps à ton frère qui t'aime.*

Do you know enough French to know what that means?

Write again, Quita, I like to get letters from you.

*Your brother,*

HOUSTON

*Escadrille Spad 94, G. C. 18, S. P. 12, France*

*March 25th, 1918*

*Dear Father:—*

I don't know what has happened to my letter writing lately; it certainly has gone in fits and bursts, but there's really nothing to write about.

The original Spad they gave me didn't run well, or rather I smashed it up by flopping it over landing in a ploughed field after my motor died at one hundred and fifty altitude. I was climbing full speed, but at fifty metres the motor coughed and quit. Ahead of me was a swamp, stream, trees, and a fence; to my right a marsh and stone wall, to my left a muddy, soft ploughed field. Landing ahead or to the right was beyond all question or possibility, so I dove, threw up my right wings, turned to left and flattened out. Piqued as slowly as I dared without risking wing slip, and pulled stick all the way back before letting the wheels drop. The landing was a beautiful three-pointer, for the bequille struck first. Unfortunately there was an old, rotten stump there. The left wheel struck it, throwing all the weight on the right wheel. The mud was very deep and soft, the wheel sank in a ploughed furrow up to the axle, there was a crash, the running gear

gave way, down went the nose, propeller caught, tripped and broke, and up came the tail. She hesitated a few seconds, then flopped. "*Encore en assis.*" I was very humiliated and disappointed. All the time I was in the schools I never broke a thing on any machine, not even a wire. I was very anxious to keep up the record, but here was the whole *appareil* a wreck. Nobody said anything, for it was really impossible to avoid, just rotten, hard luck. Well I now have a Spad which has given a great deal of motor trouble up to now, but they have just changed motors, and today it seemed to run all right. New Spads always give lots of trouble. The adjoining escadrille has now been three months getting their new Spads into shape, and not all of them are running yet. I hope we shall have better luck.

My room-mate has brought down a Rumpler bi-plane this morning five miles *chez eux*, but unfortunately it was not hanologated, the brume being too heavy to observe the chute. He already has five Boches officially, but several more unofficially. He is the youngest of the French aces, "*le Benjamin des As*" as the French call him. Marinovitch is his name, about the nicest fellow I have ever met. By the time you get

this letter he will probably have several more Boches and I hope I shall, too.

Have you seen the *Illustrated London News* of February 9th? There is a magnificent picture of a Nieuport bringing down an Albatross in flames. It has been greatly admired by aviators, and I have seen it on several walls. The details are excellent, and the artist knew flying and the two machines. Somehow the picture seems to breathe a bit of the thrill of the hunt, and you can almost see the Boche breaking up before crashing, with the Nieuport following in a vertical plunge, and spitting till the last minute. The whole thing is most realistic.

Col. —, head of American Aviation in France, landed here today in his little runabout Spad, and I saw the American cocardes for the first time on a plane. A red circle outside a blue circle outside a white centre. The effect is very good, but a bit of care will have to be exercised at first not to mistake the blue ring from a long distance for the dark blotch the iron cross makes. At least, that is what the French say. I don't think there's any danger myself.

I am trying to get all my financial accounts exactly systematized so I will know just where I stand. Please send me an account of my annual



income, and bonds held. Don't forget, as I want to find just what my position is.

Please send all newspaper clippings concerning my work here. I hate publicity, and am horrified at some of the letters I have received from people I don't know. I shall have to try awful stunts now to try to live up to the reputation you somehow seem to have given me. I beg you to be careful what you publish. Anything really interesting is all right, of course. But anything which seems to be trying to make a sort of hero out of me I hate. Do send every clipping, that of the ALUMNI WEEKLY, and that of the *Ledger*. I have been rather surprised you haven't sent them already. I am anxious to see them, for I don't remember at all what I wrote.

Thanks for candy and book by Elbert. Just missed him in Paris. I was in on a twelve-hour business visit, and left a note for him at his hotel. He has gone to Talse Bolsena, an Italian hydra-vion school on a lake in the Apennines, about sixty miles from Rome, but doesn't expect to remain long. Mrs. Dent might like to know.

Will try desperately to write soon.

*Lovingly,*

HOUSTON



## APPENDIX

ESCADRE DE COMBAT N° 1

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GROUPE DE COMBAT N° 18

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ESCADRILLE SPA 94

Extrait de la Décision du Cdt de l'Escadre  
de Combat N° 1 en date du 1er mai 1918.

.....  
Note N° 696/2 du G.A.N. en date du 29 avril

ORDRE GENERAL N° 4

Le Général Commandant le Groupe d'Armées de Réserve cite  
à l'ORDRE de l'ARMÉE:

WOODWARD Houston (Américain), Caporal (Légion Étrangère) à  
l'Escadrille SPA 94

"Pilote de chasse audacieux jusqu'à la témérité et recherchant  
opiniâtement l'ennemi. Le 6 janvier 1918 abattait un avion ennemi loin  
dans ses lignes. A disparu le 1er avril 1918 au cours d'un combat contre  
plusieurs avions ennemis".

.....  
Pour copie conforme

Aux Armées, le 21 mai 1918

Le Commandant de l'Escadrille SPA 94.



Translation.

Fighting Squadron #1.

-----  
Fighting Group #18.

-----  
Squadrelle SPA 94.

Extract from the Decision of the Commander  
of Fighting Squadron #1, dated May 1, 1918.

Note #695/P of G.A.R. (General of the Reserve Army.)  
dated April 29th.

GENERAL ORDER NO. 4.

The General Commanding the First Group of the Army of Reserve  
cites in the Order of the Army:

WOODWARD Houston (American), Corporal (Foreign Legion) of the  
Squadrelle S.P.A. #94

"A Pilot of pursuit, daring even to the verge of recklessness in  
his obstinate search for the enemy. On the 6th of January 1918 he  
brought down an enemy machine, far within his lines. He disappeared  
on April 1st 1918 during a battle with several enemy machines."  
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Certified Copy.

To the Armies, May 31, 1918.  
Commander of Squadrelle SPA 94.  
(Signed and Sealed) Audry (?)



## TRANSLATION

COMBATting FLEET NO. 1,  
COMBATting GROUP NO. 18,  
SPA ESCADRILLE 94.

*Postal Division 92, April 9th, 1918*

*Dear Sir:—*

I duly received your favor of the 5th inst. and beg to send you at once the information I have on Corporal Pilote Houston Woodward, who has disappeared and is very much regretted by my escadrille.

The first of April, in the afternoon Woodward was sent on patrol in the lines of the enemy; he was seen several times during that patrol by myself. The French patrol having attacked a certain number of enemy aeroplanes, there was a fight after which Corporal Woodward disappeared.

The fight took place in the North and North-West region of Montdidier at a small altitude (about 1,000 metres) and two hypotheses seem possible: Corporal Woodward was brought down during the fight wounded or killed, or else an accident occurred to his apparatus obliging him to land in the lines of the enemy. The thick fog

and the clouds which existed on that day prevented us from learning more of him.

Corporal Woodward was on a type Spad apparatus, bearing No. 1419 with a motor No. 10.828.

Thanking you in advance for any inquiries you may wish to make on his account, we beg to remain,

*Yours very sincerely,*

*Signed by the Commandant of Escadrille Spad 94*



Y. M. C. A.—A. E. F.

*12 rue d'Aguesseau,  
Paris, February 12, 1919*

*My dear Dr. and Mrs. Woodward:—*

I have just sent you cable reading as follows:

“Located Houston’s grave at Montdidier.

“EDMONDS.”

This is the result of the energy and untiring interest of Lieut. Pierre Marinavitch of Escadrille No. 94, who has been untiring in his efforts to secure satisfactory and positive information for you. I wrote you sometime ago that after Montdidier was recovered from the Germans it was reported that Houston’s plane had been found near the roadside, charred as the result of burning. No later report was ever received from the Army, for the region is so much of a desert that but few people have returned. I asked Marinavitch to give me his first free day in Paris for the purpose of prosecuting a personal inquiry and last week he notified me that he would be free today for this purpose. I asked Walter K.

Towers who is one of the editors of "The American Boy" and a magazine writer of reputation, to go along with us and to take his camera. We started this morning from Paris on a bleak, rainy and disagreeable day. We reached Montdidier about one p. m. and found this famous town in complete ruins. No one has returned to live there yet except a few policemen and the general condition is as desolate as around Ypres. We made inquiries at Montdidier but nothing has been done yet by the Army authorities looking toward the marking or identification of graves. We then proceeded out from Montdidier on the right to Rubescourt, passing continually through lines of barbed wire, trenches, machine gun emplacements, dug-outs, etc.—the whole surface being littered with German *débris* including shells, fuses, hand grenades, etc. We stopped at every grave we could see in the hope of obtaining some identifying clue.

About three and a third kilometers from Montdidier, which is one kilometer from Rubescourt on the right hand side of the road going from Montdidier; and perhaps fifty yards from the road we saw the ruins of an aeroplane, and Marinavitch exclaimed at once that it was a

Spad. We got out immediately and found the charred remains of a badly battered and burned plane. It had evidently hit the ground with considerable force as it had made quite a little impression. Practically all of the woodwork was burned and the metal was also broken and twisted. Marinavitch at once identified it by the colors painted on the metal as belonging to Escadrille No. 94. By united pulling we turned it over and then scraped the mud and rust from the motor plate, eventually finding the number, 10828 which was the number of Houston's motor which he took out on April 1st. About ten yards from the motor to the right was a long grave which had been dug in a shell pit. It was marked by a small cross consisting of two pieces of charred wood from an aeroplane and at the foot was a small charred piece of the plane painted red and stuck into the grave by its wiring. There was no name but from this identification it seems clear that the aviator who was in the plane when it came down on April 1st was buried here. Marinavitch tells me that it was Houston's practice not to carry a name plate and that is probably the reason why no report has ever been made of his death.

From the condition of the aeroplane it seemed quite clear to Marinavitch, and I accept his opinion, that Houston was shot in mid-Air, that the shot set the machine on fire, that he was probably killed instantly either by the bullet or the fall and that the burning of the plane also caused the destruction of his papers and reports so that it was impossible for the Boche to identify by name the aviator.

I had in my pocket the little Prayer Book for Soldiers and Sailors which the Brotherhood of St. Andrew sent me after I had been over here, and you will be interested to know that we had prayers by the side of the grave, especially the prayers on page 79 and 94 in the book. It was a most desolate scene. The country is flat; it was raining part of the time; everything habitable had been destroyed; trenches abound, running in every direction; the surface is continually pitted with shells and while perhaps the desolation is not quite as great as at Ypres, yet it simply baffles description to anyone who has not seen devastated country. The four of us were the only ones in sight.

After this inquiry we felt reasonably certain that Houston's body is reposing in the land where

he fought so well and for which he was content to  
lay down his young life.

With sincere regards, I am

*Yours faithfully,*

FRANKLIN SPENCER EDMONDS

*Dr. George Woodward,*

*Chestnut Hill,*

*Philadelphia, Pa.*

RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE

MINISTÈRE DE LA GUERRE

Aéronautique Militaire

## BREVET D'AVIATEUR MILITAIRE

*Le Ministre de la Guerre,*

*En l'instruction en date du 20 Mars 1917 sur  
la délivrance du Brevet relatif à la conduite des  
appareils d'aviation.*

*En l'avis favorable des Commissions d'examen  
des candidats au dit Brevet.*

*Donné à la date du 30 Septembre 1917  
au M<sup>r</sup> Woodward Houston*

*Soldeur*

*le Brevet d'Aviateur Militaire*

*Fait à Paris le*

*19*

*1<sup>er</sup> 9075*

MINISTÈRE  
DE LA GUERRE

*République Française*

Secr. Secretariat d'Etat  
de l. Mer nautique. Militaire  
et. Marine

The New Structure & Stat.  
 de l'Aéronautique. Hildesheim et. Hannover  
 a. H. Erg. Houston Woodward  
 1 April 1918

Le Président du Sénat. Ministre de la  
Guerre a écrit sur une proposition d'augmenter le  
nombre des quatre régiments de cavalerie en  
régiments de "Infanterie d'élite" qui seront  
l'un de leur noyau sur une grande partie  
notamment dans les régiments, une belle partie  
de points de la guerre.

6. - Les m<sup>rs</sup> constatés en un certain lieu, sont  
totaux, vers les autres, de "rien" et d'un rapport  
ou en relief de la tête de l'un ou l'autre, qui se  
glorifiquement partent sur une montagne de talus de la  
craie de la première ou de la seconde, laquelle

Je me réjouis extrêmement de voir de vous que  
parce qu'il est impossible que d'un moment le bon usage  
ne nous vienne à l'esprit. Je vous prie de m'en  
donner un exemple par un petit, et de le faire  
sentir à un autre par un autre.

23 Novembre 1851











Date  
January  
23rd 1918

Number  
178

# LA FAYETTE FLYING CORPS

In recognition of the services rendered to France and her Allies  
for the cause of humanity, this certificate has been issued  
to Sergt Houston Woodward  
who served during the European war in the capacity  
of Volunteer in the French Aviation

Thereby in a measure repaying the great debt which  
America owes to France and contributing to the victory  
of Liberty and Civilization over military Autocracy  
and Barbarism.



McAuliffe

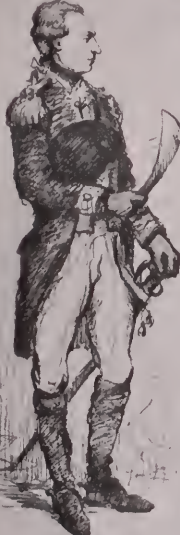
W. J. Lillie

William D. D.

Honorary President

President

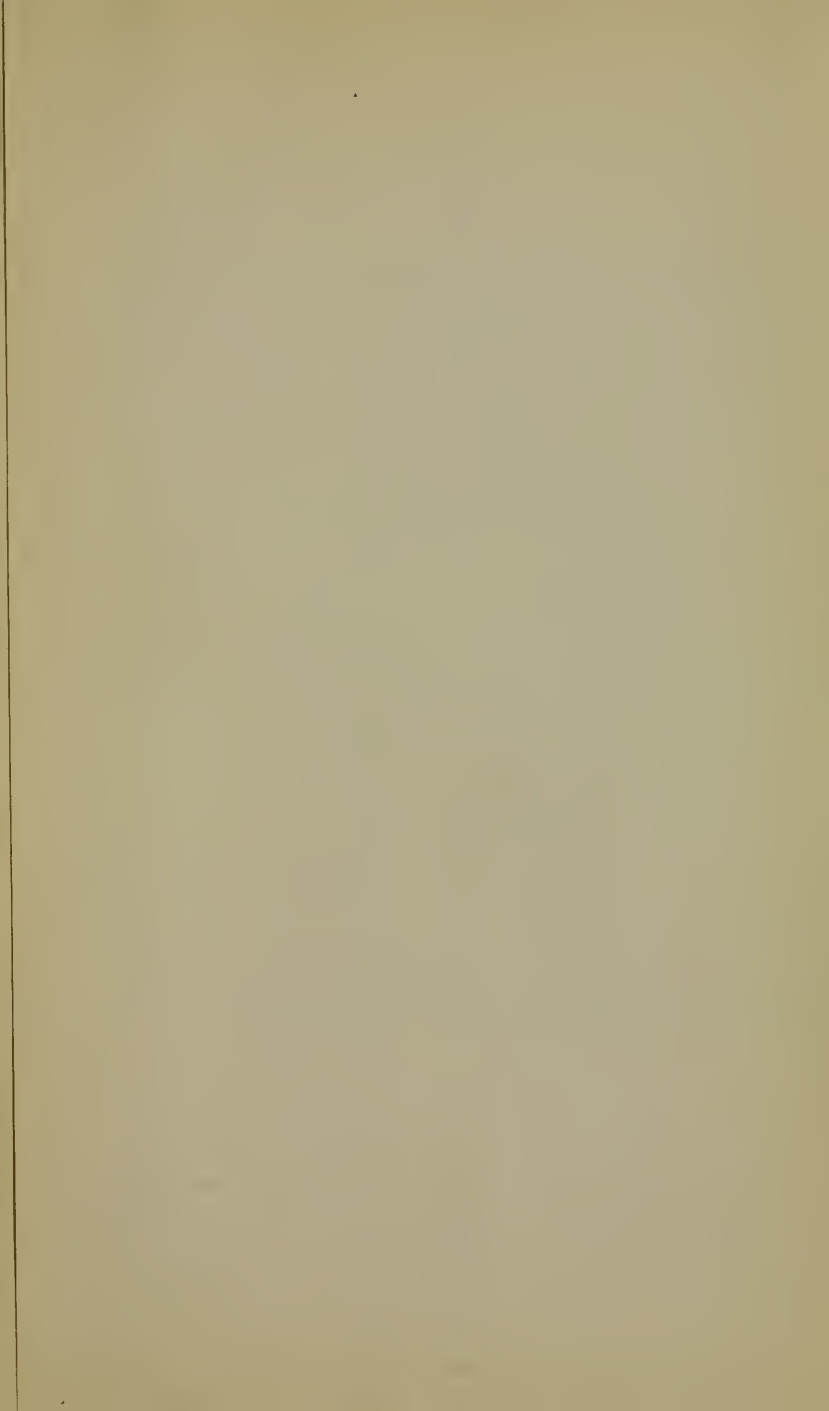
Vice President



Lafayette No 124

First of January 1918







N. 116 6110 4

N° 6660

CARTE D'IDENTITÉ

DE PILOTE D'AVION

Nom: *Woodward*

Prénoms: *Houston*

Grade: *Captain*

Breveté N° *16* Don N° *16*

N° *31-10-17*

Formation: *G.D.E.*

Le Chef du Service Aéronautique  
ad. Quartier Général

Cachet



Signature du Titulaire

*H. Woodward*





In a shell hole in France,  
By the wreck of his plane,  
Lies my beautiful soldier son.  
Do I grieve, do I miss him,  
Am I proud, am I sad,  
That he's staying there—  
Over in France?

He was strong and so tall,  
Such a beautiful boy—  
His hair was as black as the night.  
If he hadn't been beautiful  
Perhaps I'd not care  
That he's staying there—  
Over in France.

If he'd only been ugly,  
Or selfish, or cross,  
I'd have thought it was all for the best.  
He never was selfish,  
He always was kind,  
But he's staying there—  
Over in France.

He was too young a boy  
To leave me that day:  
I remember the things that we bought  
And the cab and the steamer  
That took him away;  
And he's staying there—  
Over in France.

He was praised as a pilot,  
He brought down a Hun,  
And they gave him a Croix de Guerre  
With a palm and a ribbon.  
He was shot in the air;  
He is staying there—  
Over in France.

Whenever I'm home  
He is not in his room;  
He is not in the room with me.  
There's a blur in my eyes—  
Perhaps he will come  
If he's not staying there—  
Over in France.



Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process  
Neutralizing agent: Magnesium Oxide  
Treatment Date: **MAY 2001**

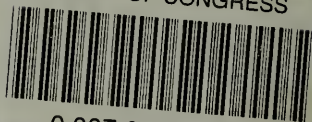
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